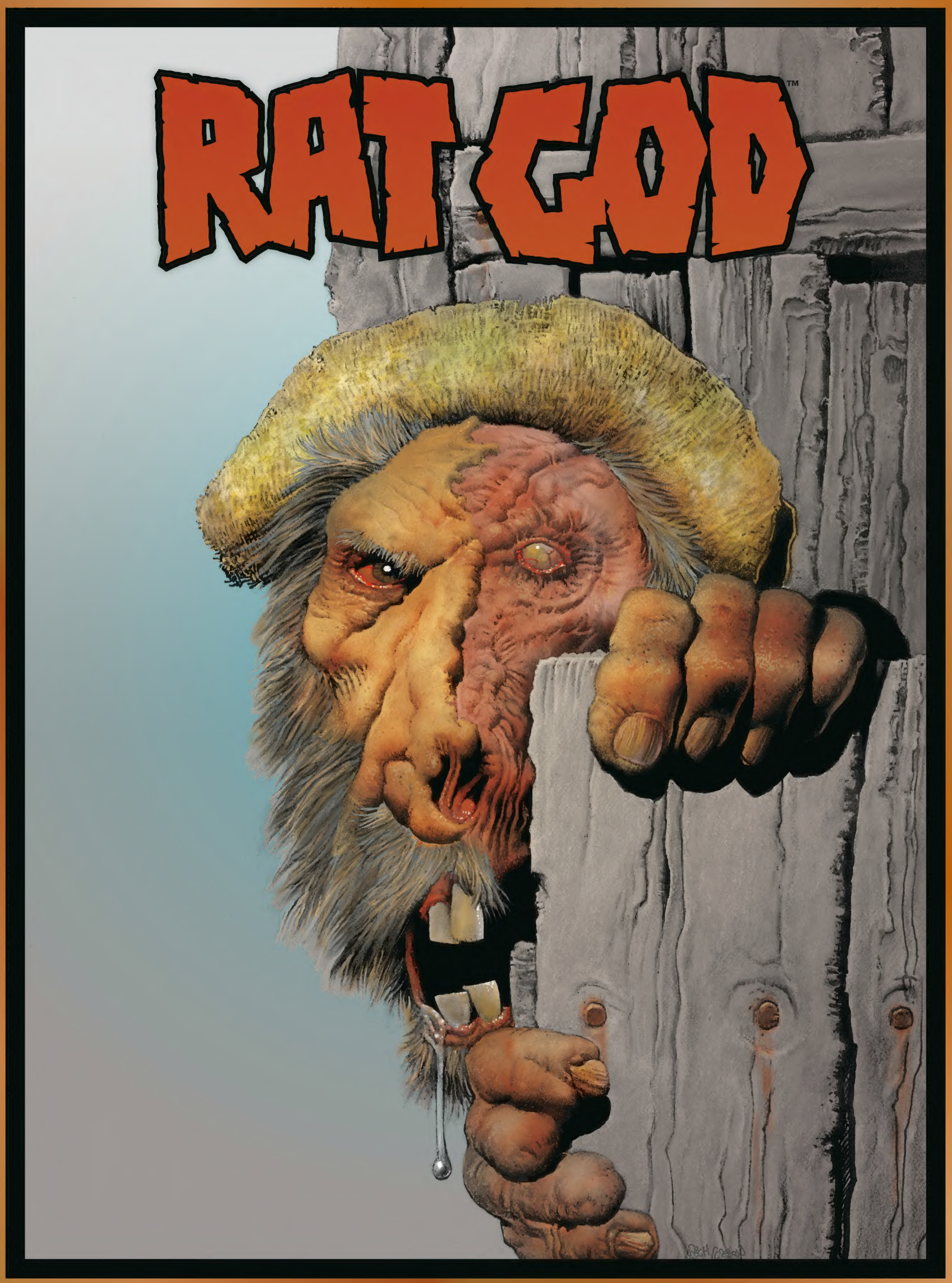

RICHARD CORBEN

RAT GOD™

RICHARD CORBEN

Cover for *Rat God* #3

RAT GOD™

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Visit Native-Languages.org for more information or to donate to the preservation of Native American languages.

RAT GOD

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INTRODUCTION TO RICHARD CORBEN'S *RAT GOD*

CAITLÍN R. KIERNAN

I've been trying for several days now to recall where and when I first encountered the work of Richard Corben. I'm fairly certain it was at the dawn of the 1970s, and so I was likely seven or eight years old. Maybe, probably, it was something he'd done for *Vampirella*, *Creepy*, or *Eerie*, the sort of books I was never allowed to buy, so I had to read them covertly at the drugstore's magazine rack. But I think it's safe to say that whatever that first exposure was, it probably made a very deep impression on my young psyche, and likely counts as one of those things that pushed my imagination in the macabre direction that would become its True North. As in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, Algernon Blackwood, Shirley Jackson, and, frankly, too many others to list, the nightmares that flowed from Corben's pens and pencils set me on this path, this road of marvelous darknesses and monstrosities. This thing that I do most days, birthing my own bad dreams. There's inevitably a little bit of Corben's artistic DNA at work; his grotesqueries made far too indelible a mark for this not to be so.

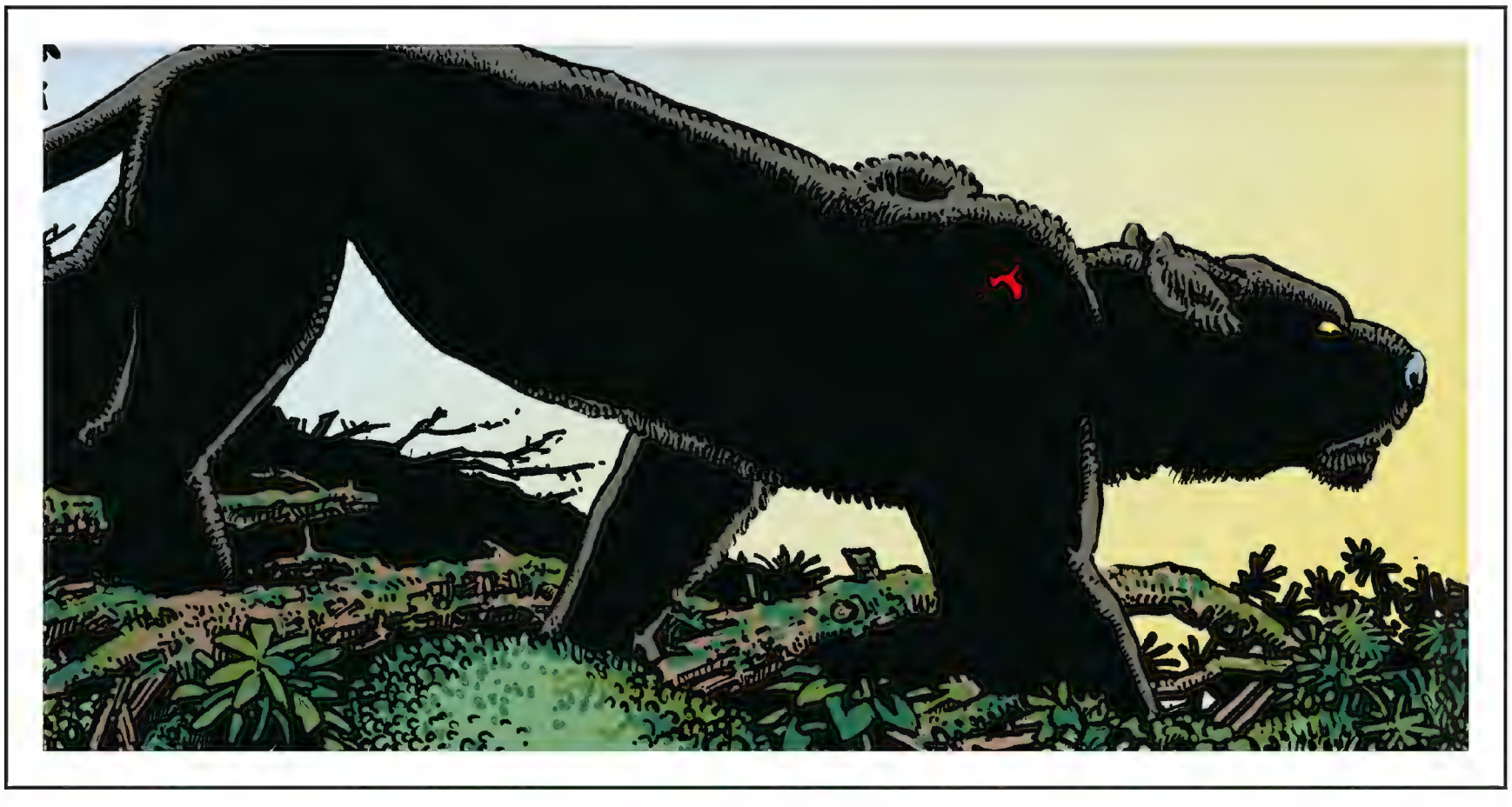
So, when I was asked to write an introduction for a new edition of *Rat God*, of course I said yes. What the hell else would I have said? It

didn't even matter that I'm honestly not very good at this sort of thing. It felt like a bit of debt I should repay.

And speaking of Mr. Lovecraft (well, I did, a few lines back), *Rat God* is obviously Corben acknowledging the role that the Grand Ol' Gentleman of Providence played in the warping of his own mind's eye. The story not only features landmarks familiar to those who know the Lovecraft "mythos" (Arkham, the Miskatonic), but it also follows a fairly standard Lovecraftian story arc. A scholar ventures into the wilderness of early twentieth-century New England, a landscape that might have had Model T Fords trundling along wagon paths, but still was a long damn way from banishing the horrific beings that had called it home for ages before *any* race of humans set foot in North America. In *Rat God*, this proper, learned fellow wandering from the sanctuary of the civilized, mechanized world happens upon . . . well, no. I hate synopses and especially the sort that give the story away. But if you've read, say, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, then you know the sort of fish out of water of which I speak (pun unintended, natch). Only this time, *this* time there's something different at work. Our wayward protagonist isn't just traipsing randomly about delving into ancient secrets and antiquarian junk. No, this time he's a white man seeking a Native American girl with whom he's fallen in love. So, right off, we're going distinctly *anti*-Lovecraft, HPL with his racism turned back upon itself, so to speak. But still, there are the usual props. There's an eerie old ghost town named Lame Dog, swamp Yankees of highly dubious parentage, a moldering cemetery where evil rites are enacted, the monstrous god-thing of the title, and so forth. But in *Rat God*, Corben does something a *little* bit different with it all.

Like so many of Lovecraft's characters, here's a man who'd have been better off not looking too closely. That the object of his interest is a woman, and she's Native American—that's where Corben takes a road HPL never would have trodden. And in this age when it's increasingly difficult for many to ignore the xenophobia baked into the Cthulhu mythos brand of cosmic horror, well . . . I'll stop short of calling it transgressive. And it should be noted that the Native American characters are treated like actual human beings, not subhuman alien repositories for a Lovecraftian revulsion of non-whites and his fear of the unknown and, in particular, of race mixing. Anyway, you don't need me to tell you this is a story you should read. Open the book and turn a few pages, and you'll see how strongly *Rat God* speaks for itself.

Caitlín R. Kiernan
Birmingham, Alabama
March 4, 2025



CHAPTER ONE

"A SINISTER ENTITY STALKED THE PREHISTORIC, GLOBALLY VAST TAIGA. THE TREES FLUTTERED WITH GROWING UNEASE.

"AN UNEARTHLY VISAGE *LEERED* MENACINGLY.

"A TIMID NATIVE FALTERED."

THE MARKER, ACHAK! WHICH WAY *NOW?*

CONTINUE *SOUTH,* SISTER! THEY MAY NOT FOLLOW US FURTHER.

"CHILDREN OF THE FOREST FLED THROUGH ENDLESS GREEN CORRIDORS AND INCARNATE DARKNESS, THEIR LIVES AT STAKE."

ACHAK, WHAT?

SSH!

BACK INTO THE BUSHES, KITO.

DO THE CTHANHLUK FOLLOW US? OR IS IT TLINGIT?

I CAN'T TELL FROM HERE. DOES IT MATTER?

EITHER WILL KILL US.

THEY GO NORTH. WE GO SOUTH. NOW!

MAYBE THE TLINGIT WON'T KILL US--

--IF THEY JUST TAKE US FOR SLAVES.

IS THAT YOUR SOLUTION, SISTER?

I SHOULD LEAVE YOU HERE.

HOW FAR MUST WE GO, TO BE *SAFE?*

SHH! BE QUIET!

"AMBIENT SOUNDS CEASED. NO BIRD SONG. NO INSECT BUZZ. AN OMINOUS PRESENCE."

INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE--*BAD SPIRIT FOLLOWS US. WE GO NOW.*

A FOREST *SPIRIT!* IT WILL EAT US. LET'S GO BACK!

ACHAK, IT'S MOVING!

NO MAK-KITOTO. IT'S *WU-JI*, THE VULTURE.

SKRAK!

"WITH INEXORABLE DEADLY SLOWNESS, THE THING SHRUGGED."

EEEAH!

KITO!

DON'T BE FRIGHTENED! IT WAS JUST DEAD PEOPLE LEFT THERE TO *WARN* US. *LONG* DEAD! NO HARM.

ACHAK, IT TURNED AND *LOOKED* AT ME!

IT'S TOO DARK TO GO FURTHER, SISTER.

CAN WE HAVE A FIRE?

NO FIRE!

AND IT *DIDN'T* LOOK AT YOU.

COME CLOSER. WE SHOULD HOLD EACH OTHER--TO STAY WARM.

IT *DID* LOOK AT ME, ACHAK.

"THE FEAR-HAUNTED REFUGEES SLEPT VERY LITTLE. FINALLY PREDAWN LIGHT FILTERED THROUGH THE TREES."

WE MUST GO QUICKLY!

I FOUND SOME *BERRIES.*

SOMETHING TO EAT, YES! I AM VERY--

--HUNGRY, I--

--COULD--

SSSSSS THUMP!

ACHAK!

BACK TO THE TREES, *QUICKLY!*

FRRIT

LISTEN CAREFULLY, KITO.

HEAD SOUTH. KEEP TO THE TREES. REACH THE RIVER IN THREE DAYS. TLINGIT WON'T FOLLOW PAST THERE.

GO *NOW!*

--I WILL-- JOIN YOU--

GO!

HIIYAH!

HAH! EASY SHOT, CTHANHLUK!

KRAK!

THUD!

HAUGH!

TWAK!

CHOP!

CHOP!

THIP!

YEE-YAUGH!

HAUGH! I SEE YOU!

"THE REMAINING WARRIOR RELENTLESSLY FOLLOWED..."

HEE HEE HEE!

AAAH!

UNH!

...UNTIL *SOMETHING* TRIPPED HIM UP!

THE GIRL RAN AND RAN...

WHEN HE CAME TO, HE DECIDED--

AH, HELL WITH IT!

"...UNTIL SHE THOUGHT HER LUNGS WOULD BURST.

"THEN SHE RAN SOME MORE.

"SHE HID AT NIGHT AND THOUGHT ABOUT ACHAK, FOLLOWING HIS ORDERS."

HE WILL MEET ME AT THE RIVER...

ACHAK...

"AT DAWN OF THE THIRD DAY, MAK-KITOTO HURRIED TO MEET HER BROTHER."

THE RIVER. HE WILL BE HERE...

"A BLAST OF HOT WIND BROUGHT HER TO HER FEET.

"A LOW, GROWLING MOAN ECHOED THROUGH THE TREES. FEAR GRIPPED HER.

"EVERYTHING SEEMED STRANGE, BUT SHE STOOD HER GROUND."

R-R-R-R-

SSSCREEEEEECCH!

WHAT THE--?

HEY! HELLO!

WHAT FIENDISH *DEMON* FROM HELL...?

HELLO.

OH, HELLO. DID YOU JUST SEE AN *INDIAN WOMAN* STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD?

NO, JUST ME. SAY, COULD I GET A LIFT?

SURE. HOP IN. I WAS SURE I SAW A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. SHE WAS *NAKED!*

I WISH I HAD.

NOT REALLY, BUT I KNOW THE AREA. I COULD GUIDE YOU.

CAN YOU SHARE GAS EXPENSES?

YOU LOOK *FAMILIAR.* DO I KNOW YOU?

YEAH, I'M CHUK.

WE DIDN'T MEET, BUT I SAW YOU IN ARKHAM. YOU'RE KITO'S FRIEND, CLARK ELWOOD. I'M HER *BROTHER.*

I'M SURPRISED TO SEE YOU *HERE.*

HER BROTHER? *HMPH!*

I'M RUNNING LOW ON FUEL. IS THERE A FILLING STATION NEAR?

JUST OVER THE NEXT HILL.

IS THERE AN ATTENDANT?

SHELL GASOLINE

PETROL IS EXPENSIVE HERE, BUT YOU'D BETTER GET ALL YOU CAN.

IF WE CAN GET SOME SERVICE.

HEY, *CHIEF.* I NEED A FILL-UP.

IS *LAME DOG* NEAR HERE?

"LAME DOG"?!

NEVER HEARD OF IT.

IT'S LATE IN THE SEASON TO BE HEADING NORTH.

THAT'LL BE SIX DOLLARS, *KEMOSABE.*

MY GOD! EXPENSIVE OR *GOUGING!*

I THINK YOU'LL REGRET IT, "CHIEF"! THERE'S *SNOW* ON THE WAY.

WHY WERE YOU RUDE TO THAT OLD MAN?

"RUDE"?! I JUST CALLED HIM *"CHIEF."* THAT'S AN HONOR AMONG THE LOWER INDIAN RACES, ISN'T IT?

BESIDES, I'M IN A HURRY. HE WAS JUST SITTING ON HIS *BUTT.*

"LOWER INDIAN RACES," *EH?* WHAT ABOUT *YOU?*

ME?!

I'M PURE *ARYAN* STOCK. MY FAMILY HAS BEEN THE RACIAL BACKBONE OF NEW ENGLAND FOR GENERATIONS.

WHY LAME DOG?

NONE OF YOUR *DAMNED* BUSINESS!

NOSY BASTARD!

YOU'D BETTER LET ME OUT HERE.

SUITS ME!

SKKREEECH!

ASSHOLE!

WHAT TH--

THAT SON OF A BITCH! I'LL SHOW HIM.

HEY YOU!

RRRRRRRRRRRR

NOW WHAT?

YOU *JERK*, CLAIMING TO BE KITO'S BROTHER.

TEACH YOU NOT TO SULLY A *WHITE* GIRL'S NAME!

THAK!

PUNCH!

WHUNK!

VVRROOUR!

OOOOWW...!

THAT BASTARD BROKE MY *JAW!*

HE THREW OUT MY STUFF...

DOESN'T MATTER, THOUGH. I'M STILL GOING TO KICK HIS *BUTT.*

OH, OBSCENE *BLASPHEMIES!*

I HOPE I CAN REACH SOME SETTLEMENT SOON.

HOW IN THE *SEVEN HELLS* DID I COME TO *THIS?*

BECAUSE OF *KITO,* OF COURSE! BUT DID I *HAVE* TO GET SO UPSET AND COME ALL THIS WAY?

"SHE'S JUST A GIRL I BUMPED INTO ONE DAY. A COLLEGE ACQUAINTANCE."

OH! EXCUSE ME!

IT'S MY FAULT. I'LL GET YOU ANOTHER.

THANK YOU.

I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT ONE OF MY POST-GRAD CLASSES. SORRY TO BE SO CLUMSY.

I WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION EITHER.

MY NAME IS CLARK ELWOOD.

I'M HERE DOING SOME EXTRA STUDY FOR MY DOCTORATE. THE LIBRARY HAS VERY RARE DOCUMENTS CONCERNING SOME OBSCURE AMERICAN ARTISTS. THAT'S MY AREA OF INTEREST.

YAWSKATONIC UNIVERSITY

WOW! SOUNDS PRETTY DEEP. I AM KITO HONTZ. I'M WORKING MY WAY THROUGH FOR A DIPLOMA.

HOW *ADMIRABLE.* GOOD FOR YOU.

I'M AFRAID I'M...A ***DELICATE*** AND ***NERVOUS*** TYPE. MY PARENTS WOULD NEVER LET ME GET A POSITION OF MANUAL LABOR.

IT MUST BE NICE.

I WORK VERY HARD AT MY STUDIES. IT'S ABOUT ALL I CAN MANAGE.

I SEE.

WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN?

PROBABLY. I WORK IN THE ART DEPARTMENT.

NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT HER. IN FACT, SHE'S KIND OF FUNNY LOOKING...

THEN WHY COULDN'T I STOP ***THINKING*** ABOUT HER?

I'VE LIVED HERE ALL MY LIFE.

LUCKY YOU. I'M FROM THE ARMPIT OF THE NORTH, A TINY TOWN CALLED ***LAME DOG.***

THERE WAS NO FUTURE FOR US THERE, SO WE CAME SOUTH, MY BROTHER AND I.

I GUESS THE DEPRESSION HAS REALLY MADE IT TOUGH. BUT YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.

IN WHAT WAY?

ARKHAM IS A CENTER FOR *CULTURAL* AND *INTELLECTUAL* ADVANCEMENT. A MINIATURE *OXFORD* ON THE *MISKATONIC*.

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.

ACTUALLY, LAME DOG DID HAVE *ONE* NOTABLE SON.

ZACHARIAH PECK BECAME FAMOUS FOR HIS *HUGE PAINTINGS* OF THE VAST NORTHERN WILDERNESS.

I SEEM TO RECALL THE NAME.

YOU SHOULD. HE MADE A FORTUNE. HE'S VERY RICH.

BUILT A MANSION.

I'VE NEVER BEEN IMPRESSED BY EXCESS WEALTH.

TRY DOING WITHOUT IT FOR A WHILE.

WE AGREED ON THE BIG, IMPORTANT ISSUES. SHE WAS MY GOOD FRIEND...THEN THINGS TURNED BAD.

UH-OH--

WHERE'S THE ROAD?

BY THE *LOATHSOME ELDER GODS*, I THINK I'M LOST.

WHAT'S THAT?

"A BLACK, UNSEEN HORROR SEEMED TO FLUTTER BACK INTO THE OPAQUE SHROUD OF THE TREES."

SOMETHING'S *FOLLOWING* ME...!

AH!

GROWRL

CHOMP

RIIP

AH!

ROWRR!

THUMP

AAWWR

"A THRILL OF TERROR SHOT THROUGH THE MAULED PREY. HE FELT THE BLACK PANTHER'S HOT BREATH AS THE BEAST HOVERED EVER CLOSER. WERE THESE HIS LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE?"

GO AWAY. PLEEEASE...

CRACK-K!

AWRRL!

"STUNNED BY AN UNEXPECTED REPRIEVE, HE COULD ONLY STARE."

NICE SHOT, DAMON.

YEAH. CAN WE GO NOW?

CLARK STRUGGLED IN VAIN TO SIGNAL HIS UNKNOWN BENEFACTORS. THEY HAD SAVED HIM BUT THEN LEFT HIM ALONE, TO DIE IN THE SNOW...

CHAPTER TWO

"BEWILDERED, CLARK FOUND HIMSELF WANDERING IN AN ENDLESS SNOW-COVERED MAZE, BLEEDING FROM HIS RECENT MAULING. HE WAS UNSURE OF THE DIRECTION HE SHOULD GO IN. HE JUST STAGGERED ON."

I GUESS I'M LUCKY TO BE ALIVE--BUT FOR HOW LONG?

IT'S COLDER THAN PLUTO'S GHOULISH LOCKER!

CH-CH-CHATTER

B-B-BLASPHEMOUS AB-B-BOMINATIONS! I'VE N-N-NEVER BEEN SO *COLD!*

OH, BY THE GHASTLY ELDER G-G-G-GODS, IT'S ***SNOWING*** AGAIN!

SENT BY YOG SOTHOTH WITH HIS PENULTIMATE CURSE-- DARKNESS!

WHU-WHAT C-CAN I DO? JUST SIT HERE UNDER THIS LURCHING TREE OUT OF THE WIND, AND T-TRY TO THINK OF SOMETHING.

UNDER THAT STARK, LEERING, GIBBOUS MOON, WATCHING ME WHILE I FREEZE.

"IT WAS NEVER THIS COLD IN ARKHAM. IT WAS DOWNRIGHT SWELTERING COMPARED TO THIS ARCTIC, STYGIAN SHORE.

"IT WAS NICE AND WARM. WE EVEN WENT FOR A COOL DRINK, KITO AND I."

IT GETS WARM WHERE I COME FROM, BUT NEVER *HOT* LIKE THIS.

THAT SODA SHOULD COOL YOU OFF.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR HOME-TOWN.

UGH! THAT *RAT* HOLE...!

"LAME DOG IS A COLLECTION OF DILAPIDATED, DRIED-OUT, ROTTING SHACKS.

"WHEN SOME RUSSIAN PROSPECTORS MOVED INTO THE SHELTERED VALLEY AROUND 1830, THE INDIAN SETTLEMENT THERE WAS ALREADY ANCIENT.

"OF COURSE THEY WERE ATTRACTED THERE BY THE *LUST FOR GOLD.*

"THE PLACE BOOMED FOR ABOUT THIRTY YEARS.

"WHEN THEY REALIZED THE GOLD HAD RUN OUT, THE WHITES STARTED LEAVING IN DROVES.

"A FEW OF THE ORIGINAL SETTLERS REMAINED, HELD BY SOMETHING MORE THAN THE MILD CLIMATE.

"THERE WERE RUMORS OF SOME UNEXPLORED ASPECTS OF THE TERRITORY. THE NATIVE CTHANHLUK INDIANS MUST HAVE SHARED THEIR SECRETS WITH OLD ***ZEDON PECK.***

"WHATEVER IT WAS, THE OLD MAN WASN'T ABOUT TO SHARE IT WITH ANY OUTSIDERS.

"HE JOINED THE TRIBE IN THEIR PECULIAR RELIGIOUS RITES AND CEREMONIES.

"ULTIMATELY, HE INTEGRATED WITH THEM, AND BECAME THEIR LEADER.

"IT IS SAID THAT HE ORCHESTRATED SOME INCIDENTS...

"...AND BURNED THE REMAINING EUROPEAN CHURCHES.

"LAME DOG'S INHABITANTS WERE NEITHER INDIAN NOR WESTERN WHITES, BUT A MONGREL HYBRID THAT SHUNNED ANY FURTHER OUTSIDE CONTACT."

LAME DOG

KEEP OUT

MY BROTHER AND I BARELY MADE OUR ESCAPE.

SLERK!

I'LL NEVER GO BACK THERE.

I'VE GOT TO GO TO WORK NOW. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

I'LL WALK YOU OVER THERE.

BUT FATE INTERVENED, AND CLARK FINISHED HIS AFTERNOON CLASSES EARLY, SO HE DECIDED TO PICK UP KITO AT HER JOB.

NO, CLARK. I'VE A COUPLE ERRANDS FIRST. BYE!

I'M HERE TO MEET KITO HONTZ.

SHE'S IN ROOM ONE-OH-NINE. BUT DON'T GO IN UNTIL AFTER THEY FINISH.

NONSENSE.

NOTICE THIS SPECIMEN'S LACK OF SUBCUTANEOUS FAT, UNUSUAL IN A FEMALE. THE RESULT OF EVOLUTION IN AN ISOLATED, CLOSED SYSTEM.

FURTHERMORE, THERE IS ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT THE SUBJECT HAS INHERITED MANY NON-ARYAN TRAITS--

KITO--!

--SUCH AS THE IRREGULARLY SHAPED--

CLARK, WHAT--

YOU! HOW *DARE* YOU INTRUDE INTO THIS PRIVATE CLASS!

I'M SORRY. I'LL LEAVE.

CLARK, WAIT--!

CLARK!

MISS HONTZ! *MISS HONTZ!*

BY THE ANCIENT ELDER *GODS*, KITO, YOU'RE *NAKED!*

IT'S MY JOB.

I'M NOT AN *ARISTOCRAT* LIKE YOU. I HAVE TO *WORK!*

MISS HONTZ!

I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY. GOODBYE!

CLARK, *DON'T!*

CLARK, I *LOVE* YOU!

"THE YOUNG MAN FELT COLD AND BITTER. COLD AND ALONE IN THE FRIGID DESOLATION, HIS EMPTY HEART PACKED IN ICE...

"...BITTER THAT HE HAD CRUELLY CUT HIMSELF OFF FROM THE ONLY WOMAN HE HAD EVER LOVED, AND THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO TO CHANGE IT.

"THE NUMBING COLD SEEMED LESS IMPORTANT AS HE DRIFTED INTO MORE MUFFLED MEMORIES. IMPOTENT IMAGES OF A BABBLING, INSANE SPIRIT."

I'LL TELL HER I'M SORRY, BUT SHE'LL HAVE TO GIVE UP THAT JOB...

I GUESS THAT'S HER ADDRESS. WHAT A DUMP.

A BAD NEIGHBORHOOD.

ANOTHER HOODLUM. JUST GOING IN--ER, LOOKING OUT. THIS IS NOT GOOD.

THOSE OTHERS, COMING THIS WAY...

...DEFINITELY UP TO NO GOOD.

SAY, FELLOWS, WAIT A MINUTE! I'M NEW TO THIS AREA. COULD YOU TELL ME IF THERE IS A LIBRARY NEARBY?

YOU FUNNY MAN. ME LIKE HAT!

EXCUSE ME.

HEY!

KRAK!

AHH!

THUD!

UNH!

THWAK!

BUMP!

"AS THE DREAM DISSIPATED, CLARK COULD ONLY REMEMBER THEY HAD STOLEN HIS HAT."

CLARK ELWOOD, *WAKE UP!*

WAKE *UP*, ELWOOD!

YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR HOURS.

YOU!

YOU'RE COMPLETELY OUT OF YOUR DEPTH, YOU FOOL.

YOU STOLE MY CAR!

I ALSO SAVED YOUR LIFE.

YOUR CAR IS OUTSIDE. YOU SHOULD GET IN IT AND GO BACK TO ARKHAM.

THANKS FOR THE HELP, BUT *KEEP* YOUR ADVICE!

YOU ARE A ***COMPLETE*** IDIOT! THERE IS FOOD AND DRINK HERE. I AM ONLY HELPING YOU FOR MY ***SISTER'S*** SAKE, BUT YOU ARE ***REALLY*** TRYING MY PATIENCE.

OH, THANKS. I ***AM*** EXCRUCIATINGLY HUNGRY. WHAT IS THIS STUFF?

ZzZzZzZz

HMPH! I'M NOT TURNING BACK!

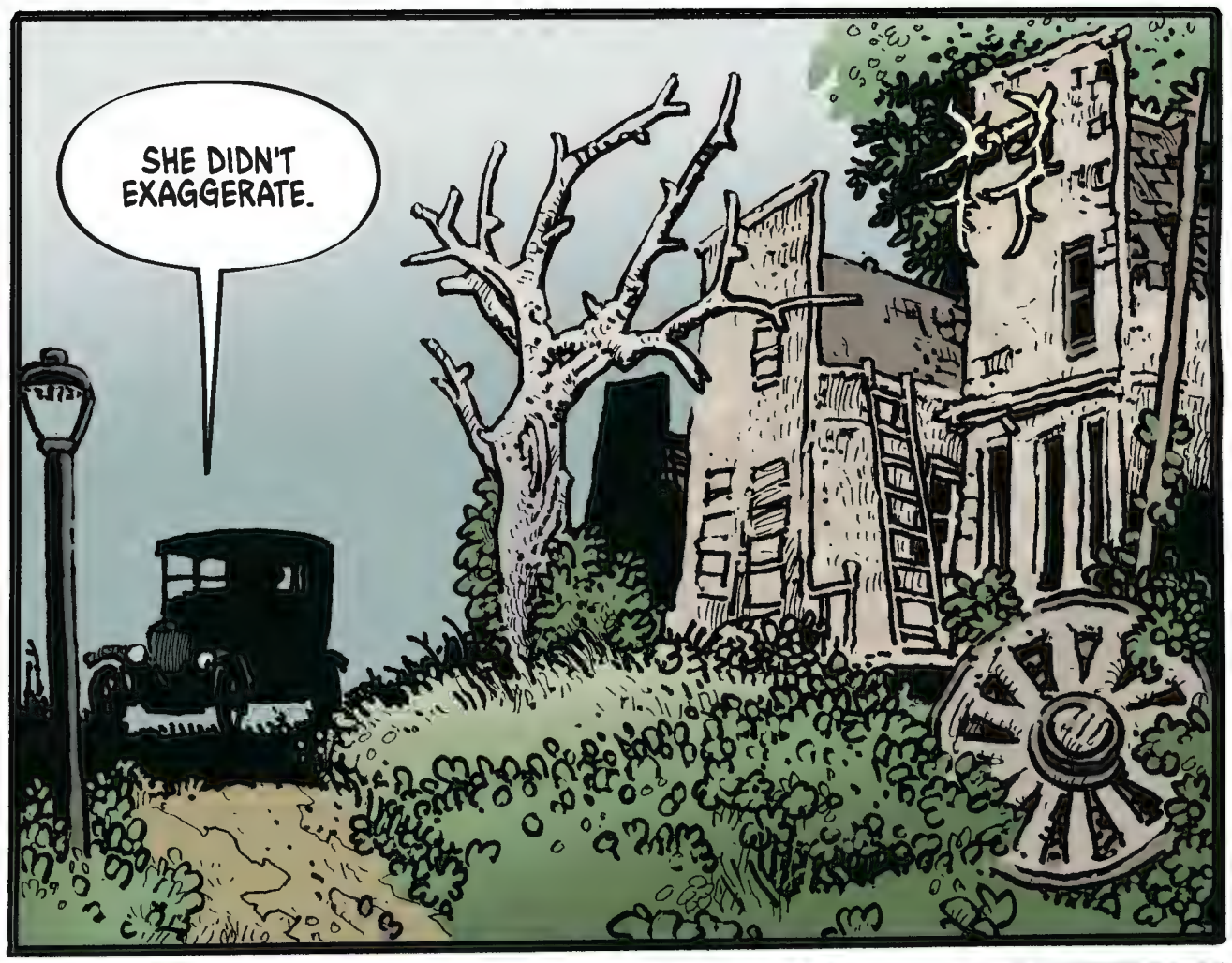
NOT MUCH OF A ROAD. I GUESS IT WILL DO.

I HOPE THAT'S THE LAST OF THE SNOW.

OWH! DAMN! THIS CAR IS GOING TO NEED A *COMPLETE* OVERHAUL, IF IT EVER MAKES IT BACK TO CIVILIZATION!

C'THULHU'S BREATH! WHAT A *FOG!*

MUST BE IT...


SHE DIDN'T EXAGGERATE.

HEY, HELLO!

HELLO!

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

SSCREEEEEEEEE

HEY, WHO'RE YOU?

WHAT THE--

I'M CLARK ELWOOD. I'M A TRAVELER. IS THERE A HOTEL?

I'D LIKE TO REST AND CLEAN UP. ISN'T THERE A HOTEL?

IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU KEPT TRAVELIN'.

NO HOTEL, BUT YOU MIGHT TRY THE ELK HOUSE.

WHAT? WHY?

THANKS, PARTNER.

YOU BEST BE GONE BY EVENIN'.

HELLO THERE! DO YOU HAVE A ROOM I CAN USE?

ROOM?

HEY, GHARLENA, THERE'S A STRANGER HERE. YOU GOT A ROOM FOR HIM?

EH?

ROOM? YEH, GOT ROOM.

UP! TOP FLOOR.

THINK THIS ONE GOOD.

WATER PUMP DOWNSTAIRS. OUTHOUSE, OUT BACK.

UH, THANKS.

GHARLENA, DO YOU KNOW A WOMAN NAMED *KITO?*

UUUH--

YOU GO AWAY BY DARK. DON'T GO GRAVEYARD.

SCRATCH SCRATCH

WELL, I'M HERE, BUT WHERE IS KITO?

I WONDER WHAT THEY HAVE TO EAT HERE.

"BREAD AND POTATOES WERE SERVED, BUT CLARK SKIPPED THE UNKNOWN MEAT. HE SET FORTH TO CONTINUE HIS SEARCH."

GOOD AFTERNOON, MA'AM. DO YOU KNOW A WOMAN NAMED KITO?

SLAM!

OH, HI THERE, LITTLE GIRL. I BET YOU COULD ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS.

FUCK YOU!

CUTE KID!

GO AWAY!

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE, YOUNG FELLER. YOU SHOULD GET OUT *NOW.*

AND DON'T GO BY WAY OF THE GRAVEYARD.

SPUT!

WHAT A BUNCH OF TROGLODYTES.

PARDON ME, SIR--

YOU SEEM TO BE IN NEED OF HELP.

THANK GOD! A REFINED GENTLEMAN. YOUR VOICE--HAVE WE MET BEFORE?

HARDLY LIKELY, SIR. I AM ***DAMON PECK.*** I LIVE IN THE PECK MANSION ON YONDER RIDGE. AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE?

I AM CLARK ELWOOD. I'M TRYING TO FIND A FRIEND. *UH...*

WHAT IS THE MATTER, SIR?

THOSE MEN--

YOU MUST THINK I'M REALLY CONFUSED.

I KNOW THEM.

MR. ELWOOD, THESE SURROUNDINGS ARE NOT GOOD FOR YOU. I ADVISE YOU TO LEAVE--AND QUICKLY.

EVERYONE IN THIS DAMNED TOWN TELLS ME TO LEAVE!

GOOD ADVICE.

I WOULD ALSO STEER CLEAR OF THE LAME DOG CEMETERY IF I WERE YOU. GOOD DAY.

AGAIN WITH THE GRAVE-YARD!

DO I HAVE "GRAVEYARD OR BUST" PRINTED ON MY BACK?

TUT, TUT.

LET ME GUESS! YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME TO STAY OUT OF THE GOD DAMNED GRAVEYARD!

MY HAT!

I'M REALLY SICK OF THIS!

KRAK!

THWK!

BUMP!

MISSED ME!

THUD!

BASTARD!

OKAY, BOYS, I'LL LET YOU OFF WITH A *WARNING* THIS TIME!

BONK!

THUD!

TWAK!

KRAK!

THAT'S ENOUGH, MOGAR.

HE MAY BE USEFUL LATER.

POOR CLARK WAS ALWAYS BEING BEATEN UP. YOU'D THINK HE'D LEARN TO AVOID SUCH ENCOUNTERS. SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.

IN THE MEANTIME, OTHER FORCES WERE BEARING DOWN ON HIM. BACK UP IN THE SNOWY FOREST SOMETHING DARK AND SINISTER FOLLOWED A TRAIL...

CHAPTER THREE

"IN A REMOTE PILE OF ANCIENT, DESICCATED BUILDINGS, A BATTERED YOUNG MAN LIES IN A DECAYED HOTEL ROOM, DREAMING--

"--OF HORRIBLE THINGS."

OOOH... NOOO...

WHAT'S THAT...?

C-C-CREAK

WHO'S OUT THERE?

OH, GHARLENA. WHAT IS IT?

YOU HURT GONE? OKAY?

I GUESS I'LL LIVE, BUT I ACHE ALL OVER.

GHARLENA, YOU'RE *NAKED!*

UH--! I'M NAKED TOO!

YOU STAY HERE. DON'T GO GRAVEYARD.

K-KLICK

THE GRAVEYARD, *EH?*

UHN. NOT THIS WAY, I GUESS.

I GREW UP CLIMBING TREES.

THERE SHE IS.

IN A SILLY OUTFIT...

THE FAMOUS LAME DOG CEMETERY. IT SEEMS A BIT LARGE FOR SUCH A SMALL, BARE-BONES TOWN.

HYRAM IKE
1802 - 1890

BLAKE

WHAT THE-- SOMEBODY WATCHING ME!

LOOK, YOU, IF YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO CAUSE ME SOME GRIEF--

DEAD! LONG DEAD! JUST LIKE BACK THERE IN THE SNOW...

IS IT A STATUE...?
NO, A MUMMIFIED BODY.
WHAT CAN IT MEAN...?

OOOOOO

OOMMMM

OOOOOO

OOOOOOOMMM

"ABRUPTLY, ALL SOUND STOPPED."

BBOOOOONNNNGG! BEBOOOOONNNGG!!

KI-AAH NO GO MONTU! DE KANTUL!

ODUN TAN KI!

OPEN THE HOLY PIT!

CREAK!

BRING FORTH THE OFFERINGS!

BBOOOONNGG! BBOOOONGG!!

"THE YOUNG SACRIFICE STOOD PARALYZED. SOME PRIMORDIAL FEAR PENETRATED HIS DRUGGED STUPOR."

KONK!

GRRROOUGH!

GGRRAAWGH!

YAAAAAA! EEEYAAA!

"THE ANCIENT, ABHORRENT RITUAL OF HUMAN SACRIFICE HAS BEEN PRACTICED BY CIVILIZATIONS BOTH PRIMITIVE AND SOPHISTICATED.

"THE MOST PRECIOUS OFFERING POSSIBLE--ONE'S OFFSPRING, THEIR OWN LIVING FLESH AND BLOOD--COULD PLACATE AN ANGRY GOD, OR BE OFFERED IN THANKSGIVING TO A BENEVOLENT ONE. CLARK WAS STUNNED, UNABLE TO MOVE."

THOSE MURDEROUS MONGREL SAVAGES!

THEY KILL AN INNOCENT CHILD FOR THIS BLASPHEMOUS PAGAN RITUAL!

COME, CHILD. YOU'RE THE NEXT CHOSEN ONE.

UP YOU GO. GOD AWAITS YOU.

OH MY GOD! ANOTHER! STOP!

KITO, YOU WERE FOOLISH TO DENY YOUR DESTINY.

STOP! STOP THIS TRAVESTY!

OOF!

WHUD!

NOOO!

AAAH!

RUN, KITO!

WHAK

INFIDEL!

CLARK?

KITO, HERE!

WHOMP

KRAK

KITO?

SWAK

YOU BASTARD!

STOP HIM!

NO MORE DEMONIC SACRIFICES FOR *YOU*, FIEND!

SOMEBODY STOP HIM!

YOU--?

DAMN YOU! YOU'VE RUINED THE CEREMONY!

WEREN'T YOU BACK IN ARKHAM?

SHUT UP! YOU ARE GOING TO *PAY* FOR THIS SACRILEGE--AND *DEARLY!*

YOU AND YOUR PITIFUL SWARM OF *RODENTS* WON'T *DO* ANYTHING!

I'M PUTTING AN *END* TO YOUR *EVIL RELIGION,* RIGHT *NOW!*

HMPH!

EERGH!

DAMN YOU!

YAAAH!

BUMP

OOF!

AAAAH!

YOU IDIOT!

TH-BUMP!

STOP! DON'T CLOSE THAT!

SNIFF
SNIFF
GRRRR

AAAUGH!

CHOMP
CRUNCH
CRUNCH

"HIS ENERGY COMPLETELY DRAINED...

"...THE WOULD-BE RESCUER HELPLESSLY AWAITED A HIDEOUS FATE.

"THEN ALL MOTION SEEMED TO SLOW, AND THE CREATURE STRANGELY DRIFTED AWAY.

"THE MAN'S HEAD STOPPED ACHING--MUSCLES RELAXED AS THE PAIN DISSIPATED."

CLARK ELWOOD, WAKE UP.

YOU MUST NOT SLEEP NOW.

GO AWAY, OLD WOMAN. I'M JUST TOO TIRED TO TALK...

THIS IS IMPORTANT.

IF YOU SLEEP NOW, YOU'LL NEVER WAKE.

LEARN YOUR PAST *AND* FUTURE HERE.

WHAT? IN A FUNNY-LOOKING CLUMP OF FUNGUS...?

UGH-- ANOTHER NASTY *RAT.*

OKAY...IT'S EATING THE FUNGUS...

IS THAT ALL?

NO! PAY ATTENTION.

IS THAT ANOTHER VICTIM?

I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO LIKE THIS...

JUST AS I THOUGHT. IS *THIS* MY FUTURE?

THIS IS NOT YOU. IT IS A *WOMAN.*

AUGH! THIS IS DISGUSTING. EATING THAT FUNGUS DIDN'T AGREE WITH HIM.

COUGH!! COUGH!!

THAT STUFF IS *GROWING!*

IT'S *KITO!*

CLARK...?

I *LOVE* YOU--

I LOVE YOU *TOO,* KITO.

BUT I WAS TOO STUPID TO SAY IT.

KITO?

I REMEMBER--

YOUR EYES ARE... *MMM...*

MMMPH?

AAH! =KOFF!=

AAAUGH! I FEEL SICK!

OOOHH...

IT'S OVER NOW, CLARK. YOU CAN SLEEP.

HOW CAN YOU *SAY* THAT?

"THE ENCHANTED VALLEY OF THE CTHANHLUKS ALSO SEEMED TO SLEEP FOR A WHILE.

"THEN SOMETHING STIRRED..."

GROAR!

"...BUT ALL WAS PEACEFUL IN LAME DOG."

IT BEEN NIGH *TWO WEEKS* SINCE WE HEARD FROM THAT YOUNG FELLER. YA KIN CLEAR OUT HIS STUFF AND DIVVY IT UP, GHARLENA.

HIM CUTE. HE COME BACK. WE WAIT.

THUMP!
KRAK!

OOOH... WHERE AM I?

I FEEL STRANGE...

WAS IT ALL A DREAM?

HEY, YOU!

DON'T MESS WITH ME TODAY, OLD MAN.

EB, QUICK! GO TELL THE BOSS.

AH, GHARLENA. I'M VERY HUNGRY, AND I HAVE SOME SERIOUS CLEANING TO DO.

YES! PURTY MAN, GHARLENA HELP.

HEY, PURTY CLARK MAN AND GHARLENA BE FRIEND, YES?

YES, GHARLENA. WE ARE FRIENDS.

SNIP SNIP

WE *PALS!*

NO, DEAR. WE ARE *FRIENDS*, AND I APPRECIATE YOUR ATTENTION, BUT I AM ON A *MISSION.*

BUT WE FRIENDS! THEY TOL' ME. BE FRIEND WITH CLARK MAN, MAKE FUN.

GHARLENA-- *WHO* TOLD YOU?

WAIT-- WHAT'S THAT? *LISTEN!*

YOU MUST LEAVE NOW. THERE'S GOING TO BE SOME TROUBLE.

TROUBLE? NO TROUBLE. ME KEEP YOU HERE WITH KISS, KISS!

GO, NOW!

OKAY. COME BACK LATER. MAKE FUN. LIKE BEFORE.

"BEFORE"?

STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
CREAAK
SSH! WE GOT HIM.
WHAM!
EH? NOT HERE!
HELLO, BOYS. WE'VE GOT SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

CHAPTER FOUR

SET THE LAMP DOWN, BOYS.

"CLARK ELWOOD IS ABOUT TO TRY HIS LUCK FOR THE THIRD TIME WITH HIS NEW FRIENDS."

GHAAA!

WAP!

WHIP

AAAH!

THUD!

THUMP!

ZONK!

AGH! MY EYE!

WHUD!

I KILL YOU!

KARAK!

AUGH! YOU HURT ZEBO!

YOU *BASTARD!* ZEBO MY BROTHER! YOU *KILL* HIM!

I KILL YOU BACK!

AAH!

GRASH!

SMASH!

NO! YOU KILL BOTH!

GIVE ME THE HAT, MOGAR!

NOOOO!

IT'S JUST A HAT, YOU IDIOT!

WHACK!

THE HAT, AND I'LL LET YOU GO!

AAAH!

MOGAR, LISTEN TO ME!

WE CAN BE *FRIENDS*, MOGAR. JUST GIVE ME THE HAT.

HAAUGH!

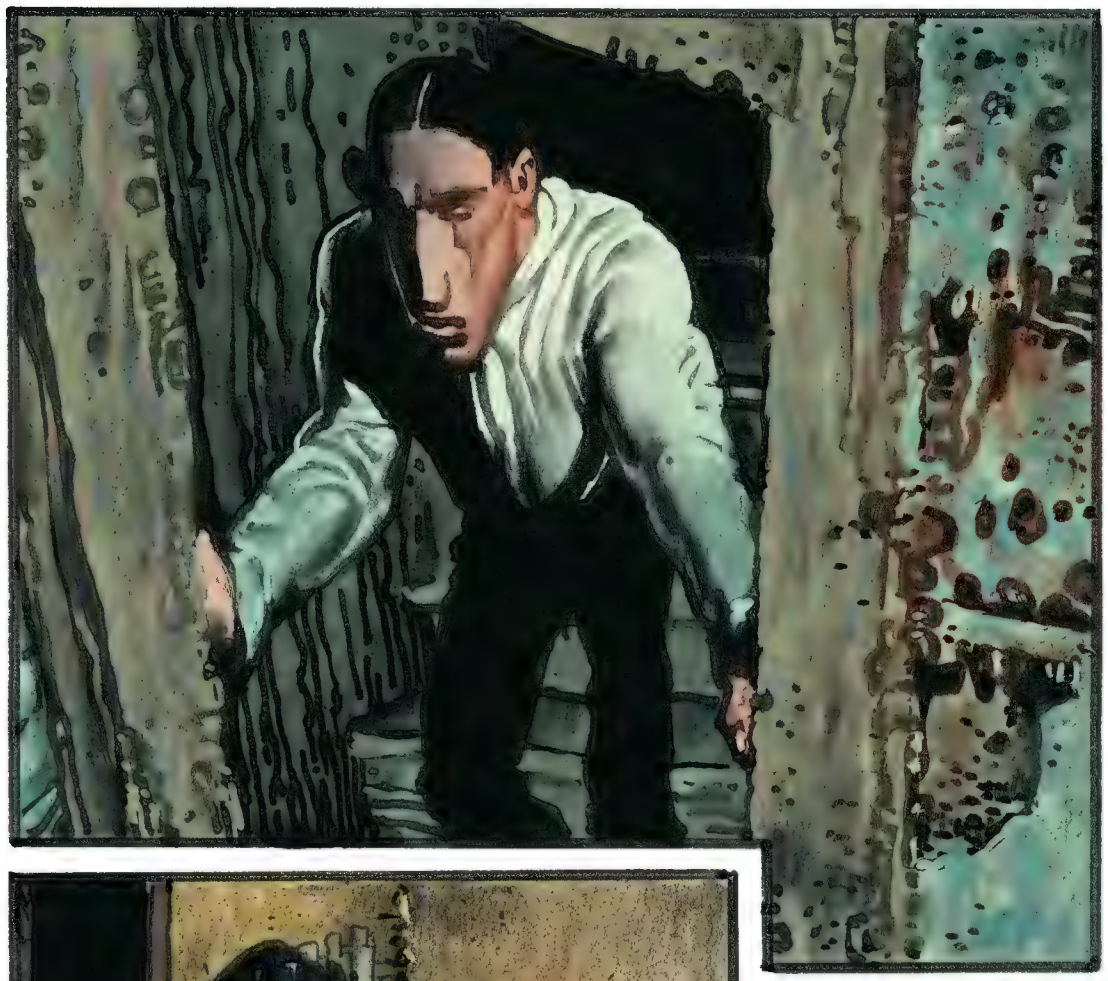
UGH!

THWAK!

THUMP! BUMP! SCRAPE!

OKAY, *KEEP* THE DAMNED HAT.

SPLAT!



...ANOTHER LIGHT.

HELLO AGAIN, MR. ELWOOD. YOU *REMEMBER* ME, YES?
YES--ONE OF LAME DOG'S BELLIGERENT ARISTOCRATS.

YOUR *THUGS* AREN'T AROUND TO PROTECT YOU. AREN'T YOU *AFRAID?*

NO, CLARK. WE ARE GOING TO BE FRIENDS NOW.
HIGHLY UNLIKELY.

SIT DOWN. I WANT TO TALK.

OKAY, WE'LL TALK. WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?

FIRST I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU WHAT I WANT.

YOU MET MY FATHER THE OTHER NIGHT.

AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE, AS I RECALL.

SO?

WOOSH

SQUEEA

OOSH

I'M *WAITING*, MR. PECK!

MR. ELWOOD, WOULD YOU GET RID OF THAT RAT?!

WHAK!

NOW WILL YOU COME TO THE POINT?

UH...BY ALL MEANS. CLARK, I WANT YOU TO PERFORM A...A SIMILAR SERVICE FOR ME.

FOR GOD'S SAKE, GET *ON* WITH IT!

ZACHARIAH PECK WIELDS ABSOLUTE POWER HERE.

SO I GATHER.

AND?

YOU MUST *KILL* HIM!

WELL, MR. PECK, THIS HAS BEEN VERY INTERESTING, IF NOT ENJOYABLE. THANK YOU FOR COMING.

YOU WILL DO IT.

WILL I?

DO I *LOOK* LIKE A KILLER?

YOU HAVE SHOWN YOURSELF TO BE EMINENTLY QUALIFIED FOR THE TASK.

THIS IS *ABSURD.* PLEASE LEAVE.

I AM A COMPLETELY NONVIOLENT PERSON.

IF YOU WON'T LEAVE, *I* WILL.

DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO *THIS* IS?

THIS COUNTRY IS FULL OF UNEXPLAINED THINGS. ONE MORE WON'T KILL ME.

GOOD-BYE!

WAIT!

I THINK YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER?

KITO!

KITO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

SHE MIGHT SEEM A BIT DISTANT, BUT THAT *COULD* BE AN IMPROVEMENT.

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* TO HER?

I'VE KEPT HER SAFE, CLARK. JUST FOR YOU!

KITO! YOUR LOVER NEEDS SOME ASSURANCE. *KISS* HIM!

SEE! SHE'S JUST AS PASSIONATE AS BEFORE. MAYBE *MORE* SO.

JUST DO THAT LITTLE THING FOR ME, AND SHE'S YOURS, FOREVER.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, CLARK.

WELL, *FORGET* IT. DO AS I WISH, OR HER BRAINS WILL BE *SPLATTERED* ALL OVER THIS ROOM!

K-CLIK

PLEASE PUT THE GUN AWAY, MR. PECK.

I'LL DO AS YOU WISH.

VERY WISE, CLARK. *COME*, KITO! IT IS TIME FOR US TO GO.

I WILL MEET YOU TOMORROW WITH SOME SPECIAL DETAILS FOR THE TASK. I'LL SEE YOU THEN.

"DAWN FOUND LAME DOG BLANKETED IN DENSE FOG. ITS DENIZENS WERE QUIET, AS THOUGH WAITING FOR SOME IMPORTANT EVENT.

"CLARK SAT PONDERING HIS DESPERATE SITUATION, HOPING SOME SIMPLE SOLUTION WOULD COME TO HIM."

HEY, CLARK MAN!

PURTY CLARK MAN!

YOU *LOOK* GHARLENA!

HEY! YOU LOOK *ME!*

WHAT, GHARLENA?

CLARK, GHARLENA RUN AWAY, *YES?*

CLARK, GHARLENA, *PALS!*

NO, GHARLENA. I LOVE ANOTHER.

NO! SHE *DEAD!*

KITO GIRL *DEAD!* CLARK GO *GHARLENA.*

YOU'RE CRAZY. GO AWAY!

CLARK DEAD SOON!

BEEP!

CLARK GO GHARLENA, QUICK *HURRY!*

SKREE!

HELLO, CLARK.

YOUR CAR HAS BEEN SERVICED AND FILLED WITH PETROL, READY FOR YOUR GETAWAY.

YES, LAME DOG HAS AN AUTOMOBILE SERVICE STATION.

YOU ARE INVITED TO LAME DOG'S ANNUAL ***BEAUX ARTS*** COSTUME PARTY.

TONIGHT AT SEVEN. YOUR COSTUME IS IN THE CAR.

I CAN'T TALK NOW.

SEE YOU THERE.

"A BLACK SENSE OF OVERPOWERING DREAD CHOKED THE TREES AND THE ANXIOUS MAN AS HE PENETRATED THE GLOOM.

"A SURREAL COLLAGE OF COSTUMES ABRUPTLY ASSAULTED THE VISITOR."

HELLO. I GUESS THIS IS THE PARTY.

"HELLO. I GUESS..."

"...THIS IS..."

"...THE PARTY."

"...THE PARTY."

"...PARTY!"

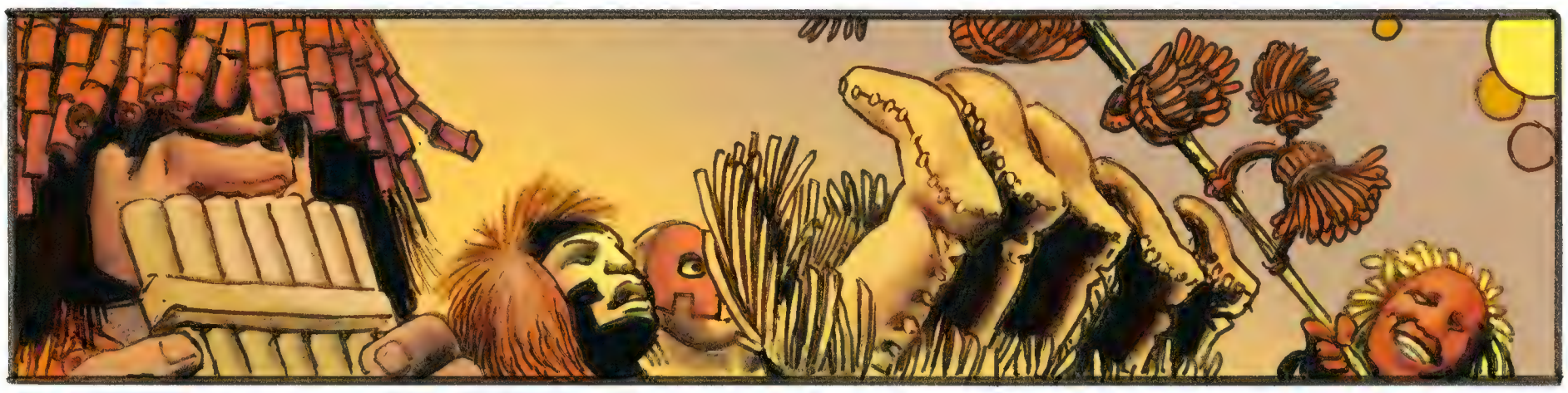
"...PARTY!"

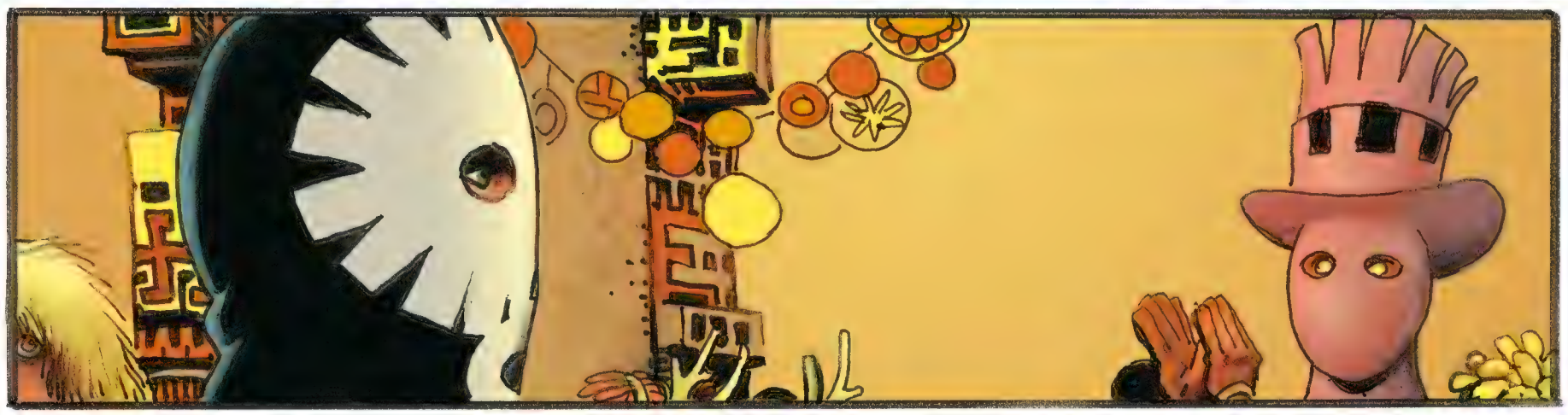
"...PARTY!"

"...PARTY!"

"...PARTY!"

"...PARTY!"





WELCOME TO OUR COSTUME GALA, CLARK.

THE PECK MANSION WAS BUILT MANY YEARS AGO AT GREAT COST. *NICE*, DON'T YOU THINK?

OLD ZACHARIAH IS VERY RICH. HE HOLDS THIS PARTY EVERY YEAR FOR HIS PEOPLE...

...FOR HIS FLOCK.

...FOR HIS CREATURES.

WHERE IS KITO?

HE EFFECTIVELY EVOKES THE PRIMEVAL BEAUTY OF THE VAST TAIGA. THESE ARE THE SOURCE OF HIS FORTUNE.

HERE ARE SOME OF HIS PAINTINGS.

I WANT TO KNOW WHERE KITO IS.

IT SEEMS SO REAL. YOU CAN ALMOST WALK INTO THE SCENE.

BUT LANDSCAPES WEREN'T HIS ONLY SUBJECTS.

HE ALSO PAINTED THE NATIVE TRIBES, HIS PEOPLE.

LATER, THE SUBJECTS BECAME DARKER, LESS PALATABLE FOR THE COMMON VIEWER.

DAMN IT, MR. PECK, YOU ARE GOING TO TELL ME OR--

HE PAINTED THE DEAD.

TELL ME!

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME.

DON'T YOU *EVER* TOUCH ME AGAIN!

I STILL HAVE THE PISTOL IF YOU HAVE ANY BRIGHT IDEAS.

HERE SHE IS, READY TO GO. NOW LET'S GET BACK TO BUSINESS.

WE SHOULD MINGLE A BIT.

YES, THERE'S A LOT OF DRINKING GOING ON.

BUT NONE FOR *YOU.*

OLD ZACHARIAH IS CULTIVATING THE TALENTS OF LAME DOG'S ARTISTS.

LAME DOG IS AN ART COMMUNITY.

HERE THE ARTISTS ARE DEVELOPING THEIR DRAWING SKILLS.

THE MODELS--

OH, WE HAVE THE BEST MODELS, CLARK. THEY CAN HOLD DIFFICULT POSES FOR AN INDEFINITE TIME.

NOTHING ESCAPES YOU, *EH, CLARK?*

--THEY'RE ***DEAD!***

AH, OUR PATRIARCH IS LECTURING, IMPARTING SOME OF HIS INSIGHTS TO HIS STUDENTS. LET'S LISTEN.

AS YOU SEE, THE SUBJECT'S FLESH SAGS AFTER SOME TIME, BUT THE BONE STRUCTURE MAINTAINS THE FORM.

AND NOW THERE IS ONE POINT I ***MUST*** BRING UP.

GET CLOSER.

WE HAVE BEEN ASSAILED BY ***EVIL THINGS*** IN ***ROBES OF DECEPTION!***

THERE! I EXPOSE THE COVERT PLOT BY MY VERY OWN SON AND HIS HENCHMAN! ***ASSASSINS! ALL IS KNOWN!***

CHAPTER FIVE

LAME DOG IS A ***STRANGE*** AND ***ANCIENT*** RUN-DOWN TOWN IN A REMOTE VALLEY. CLARK ELWOOD HAS COME HERE TO RESCUE HIS LOVER, KITO.

SEIZE THEM AND PULL OFF THEIR COSTUMES!

KILL HIM NOW, ELWOOD!

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!

THE PARTY IS ***OVER,*** MY FRIENDS. WE ARE GOING TO ***AN EXECUTION.***

MAKE IT TIGHT. HE'S A STRONG ONE.

YOU IDIOT! WHY DIDN'T YOU KILL HIM?

SHUT UP!

WE'LL TAKE HIM TO THE TUNNEL ENTRANCE.

HE MAY BE MY OWN FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT HE'S *WORTHLESS SCUM.*

OUR OLD FRIENDS WILL WELCOME THE DIVERSION.

HERE. OUR RODENT LORD WILL BE EAGER FOR A SNACK.

DAMON, MY BOY, YOU MIGHT HAVE INHERITED ALL THIS. BUT YOU WERE JUST IN *TOO DAMN MUCH* OF A HURRY.

NO, FATHER! I *LOVE* YOU ABOVE ALL! THIS MAN *TRICKED* ME INTO HELPING HIM!

I MERELY WENT ALONG TO *THWART* HIS PLAN!

NO! *NOO!* PLEASE SPARE ME. I LOVE YOU, FATHER!

I'LL BE GOOD! I'LL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE IT UP TO YOU! OH GOD, PLEASE!

OH SHUT UP! I CAN'T TAKE THE SCREAMING. WE'LL GO BACK UPSTAIRS.

AAAAHH! PLEEEASE!

I WISH THE MONSTER WOULD COME JUST TO SHUT YOU UP.

"FOR LONG MOMENTS THE ONLY SOUND WAS THE VICTIM'S HEAVY BREATHING.

"THEN SOMETHING ELSE."

AAAH! IT'S COMING!

THINK IT'S FUNNY, DO YOU? YOU WON'T BE LAUGHING WHEN THAT DECAYING MUTANT RAT STARTS GNAWING ON YOUR HEAD.

NO, NO, NO! PLEASE, NOT ME! EAT THE OTHER ONE!

KRRIP

NOOO! AAHHH!

--ACK! CHOKE

"CLARK STRUGGLED DESPERATELY IN THE CORDS.

"THEN HE FELT SOMETHING ELSE-- A TUGGING."

CHUK!

QUIET, YOU FOOL!

CHOMP CRUNCH GURGLE

URRGH!

UNNH?

WAIT! LISTEN TO ME, ELWOOD. THERE'S A PASSAGE OUT OF HERE.

YOU'VE GOT TO SAVE KITO! *UNNH!*

SHE IS DEPENDING ON ME. NOW *YOU* MUST DO IT! I-I--*UNNGH!*

WHAT IS IT, MAN? YOU'RE *INJURED!*

BROTHER, YOU MUST--

AAAAA--!

CHUK!

WHERE ARE YOU? GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

CRUNCH

RRIIIP

HE SAID "A PASSAGE OUT OF HERE." THIS MUST BE IT.

AH!

"THE AUDITORIUM SEEMED DESERTED.

"NOT QUITE."

KITO, KITO, WE'VE GOT TO HURRY. I HEAR THE OLD MAN YELLING AT HIS SUBJECTS IN THE NEXT ROOM.

UNH! ME FIND KITO. ME HAVE BITE!

!

KRAK

CLARK?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

GAAH!

THUD

NOT NOW, DEAR. THEY'RE AFTER US!

KITO, IT WAS *HORRIBLE.* YOUR BROTHER WAS KILLED BY THAT MONSTER.

"A LITTLE FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD--"

THUMP

SLUMP

IT SEEMS SO STRANGE, BUT WE'RE FREE NOW--

UH!

RROOWWR

R-R-R... GLIK

URR- GLIK

IT'S THAT THING FROM HELL!

BACK UP! BACK UP!

SCREE

GRRR

ROOWR!

IT'S GOING TO *EAT* US!

RAGH!

UUR?

skreeee

ROWR!

SNARL!

RHEEE--

GROWRR!

RIP

I HOPE THE PANTHER KILLS IT!

EITHER WILL KILL *US!*

KA-POWWW!!!

whiiine--

CLARK, LOOK OUT!

WHAT?

CLIK SLIK!

KA-POWWW!!

SPANNGG!

NO! CLARK! CLARK!

OH, CLARK--

PLEASE DON'T DIE! SOB

THEY WERE IN A HELL OF A TOUGH SPOT. SHE WAS DESPERATE. JUST WHAT COULD A GIRL DO?

CRAZY BITCH!

SLIC-CLIK

POOWWW!

SPAANNG!

BOOMP

SSECCRREEEEEE

SLIC-CLIK

POWWWWW!

RRROOOAARR SPANGGGG

FFOOOMM

WHAT THE *HELL--?*

SLIC. CLIK

KA-BOOM!!

"THE OLD MAN AND HIS RAT GOD WENT OUT IN FLAMES, STARTLING THE CTHANHLUK FOLLOWERS."

DE WOONAA WÉ KUTS'EEN AANḴÁAWU!

WÉ ḴÁA SHAAN WOONAA TSÚ. DAA SÁ YÉI ḴUGAẊTOONÓOK YEEDÁT?

WÉ SHÁATK' KITO YATSEEN. KEI GAẊTOOSHÁAT KWSHÉ?

TLÉIK'! YAK'ÉI ÁWÉ WÉ ḴÁA SHAAN AAWAJÁGI. L USHIK'ÉIYI ḴÁAẊ SATÉEYIN. WÉ SHÁATK' ÁWÉ DU EEDÉ KANAẊTOONEEK <<GUNALCHÉESH>>.

HAAT YI.Á! CH'A GOOT ḴÁAX'U TIN YOO X'AGAẊTULA.ÁAT.

OH, CLARK, YOU'VE COME SO FAR. PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME NOW.

HÉL GUGANAA. LÍTSEEN ÁWÉ HÚ.

S'IGEEKÁAWU LÉIX'U KADÁNJAA GÉ?

LÍL DU EEGÁA TLEIYÉI YÉI EETÉEK! ÁT WUDUDZIKÚXU ÁT AAWATÁW.

KEI KGWAK'ÉI CH'A DZIYÁAGIN.

HÁ'! AADÓO SÁWÉ?

"A FRAIL, ANCIENT CREATURE, THAT *APPEARED* TO BE DEAD BUT WAS *NOT*, APPROACHED.

"IT GESTURED IN SIGN LANGUAGE."

<I COME IN PEACE.>

"GHARLENA RETURNED THE GREETING."

<YOU SPEAK TO US.>

"THEY WATCHED INTENTLY AS THE STORY UNFOLDED.

<I HAVE-->

<--MUCH TO SAY-->

<--OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.>

"IT WAS A STORY OF THE WOMAN'S YOUTH. SHE HAD LEFT THE VALLEY AND LIVED AMONG THE WHITE PEOPLE. SHE HAD MANY CHILDREN.

"BUT AFTER MANY YEARS, SHE HAD TO RETURN HERE TO THE LAND OF TALL TREES.

"CLARK UNDERSTOOD *NONE* OF IT.

"BUT SHE GAVE HIM A SMALL TOKEN."

WHAT IS IT?

I DON'T KNOW.

WE GO NOW.

REJOINING THE ROAD, THEY WERE SOON LEAVING LAME DOG'S ENCHANTED VALLEY.

"BACK THROUGH THE SNOWY FORESTS.

"THEY STOPPED IN A TOWN TO TELL THEIR STORY TO THE AUTHORITIES--

SHERIFF

"--WHO IGNORED THEM, SO THEY CONTINUED THEIR JOURNEY.

"THE WOMEN SPOKE IN AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE."

X'ÉIGAA SHKÁLNEEK ÁK.WÉ?

TLAKW YÁNDE KAGAXTOO.ÁAKW DÉ!

"AFTER MANY DAYS, THEY REACHED ARKHAM."

WOULD YOU TWO SPEAK *ENGLISH*, PLEASE?

WELCOME ARKHAM MASS. 2 MILES

I MUST TALK TO THE LIBRARIAN. *YOU* MAY NOT BE *WELCOME* HERE...

HAA YAAWAT'SÁ<u>K</u>. DAA SÁ YÉI <u>K</u>UGA<u>X</u>TOONÓOK?

THIS MAY TAKE A WHILE. WAIT FOR ME. I'LL BE BACK.

HELLO, *PROFESSOR UPSLEY.* I HOPE YOU CAN HELP ME.

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU, CLARK, MY BOY. JUST COMING BY TO MAKE SURE THE ELWOOD ENDOWMENT'S BEING WELL SPENT...?

A STRANGE INDIAN WOMAN GAVE THIS TO ME.

THERE'S SOMETHING ENGRAVED ON IT...

YES, IT IS VERY WORN... BUT I CAN JUST BARELY MAKE IT OUT...

IT'S THE *ELWOOD MONOGRAM*, THE OLDER VERSION. WHERE DID YOU SAY YOU GOT IT?

THE ELWOOD MONOGRAM
Of the many old Families of New England the Elwoods are perhaps one of the most controversial

FROM AN INCREDIBLY OLD INDIAN WOMAN IN A DISTANT, REMOTE WILDERNESS.

THAT'S INTERESTING. IT'S A WEDDING RING. MUST BE FROM ABOUT 1800, 1804...

ARKHAM ARCHIVES

THE ELWOOD ARCHIVES TELL OF AN INDIAN WOMAN *"SERVANT."* THERE'S NO MENTION OF ANY INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIP. NO BIRTH DATES OR DEATH RECORDS...

HELLO! IN 1850 THERE'S A DARK-HAIRED *"GRANDMOTHER MAKKI."* SHE HAD SOME PROGRESSIVE SKIN AILMENT--DISAPPEARED 1875. THIS IS *NOT* GOOD.

IT'S NOT CONCLUSIVE, CLARK, BUT IT APPEARS THIS DARK-HAIRED WOMAN IS YOUR *ANCESTOR.*

PLEASE, TAKE NO OFFENSE...UNIVERSITY RULES, YOU KNOW. I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE THE PREMISES.

CLARK, WE KNOW THIS IS WHERE YOU WANT TO BE, AMONG THESE PEOPLE. GHARLENA AND I NEED TO GO BACK TO LAME DOG, THOUGH, AND *OUR* PEOPLE.

I LOVE YOU. WE...WE BOTH DO. BUT THE LAME DOG CURSE WILL DESTROY US IF WE STAY HERE.

YOU'LL GROW OLD, AND ONE DAY YOU'LL DIE. WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR PEOPLE... IS DIFFERENT...

WE KNOW YOUR DISDAIN FOR OUR PEOPLE, AND... WELL, CLARK, SAY SOMETHING!

MOVE OVER.

SCCRREE!!

HE BECAME THE *MAYOR* OF LAME DOG, AND SEEMED CONTENT FOR MANY YEARS. AND DID HE MAKE ONE OF THOSE GIRLS HIS WIFE? YOU'D THINK HIS CHOICE WOULD BE CLEAR...BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, POLYGAMY IS NOT UNCOMMON IN THE TOWN OF LAME DOG...

THE END

THE RATS IN THE WALLS

THE FOLLOWING PAGES PRESENT "THE RATS IN THE WALLS" BY H. P. LOVECRAFT, ADAPTED BY RICHARD CORBEN, FIRST AS THE ORIGINAL BLACK-AND-WHITE VERSION, THEN AS THE REPUBLISHED COLOR VERSION.

THE RATS IN THE WALLS

BY H. P. LOVECRAFT

IN JULY, 1923, I MOVED INTO THE RESTORED EXHAM PRIORY. THE ANCIENT ESTATE HAD BEEN IN THE DE LA POER FAMILY FOR A TIME MEASURED IN CENTURIES.

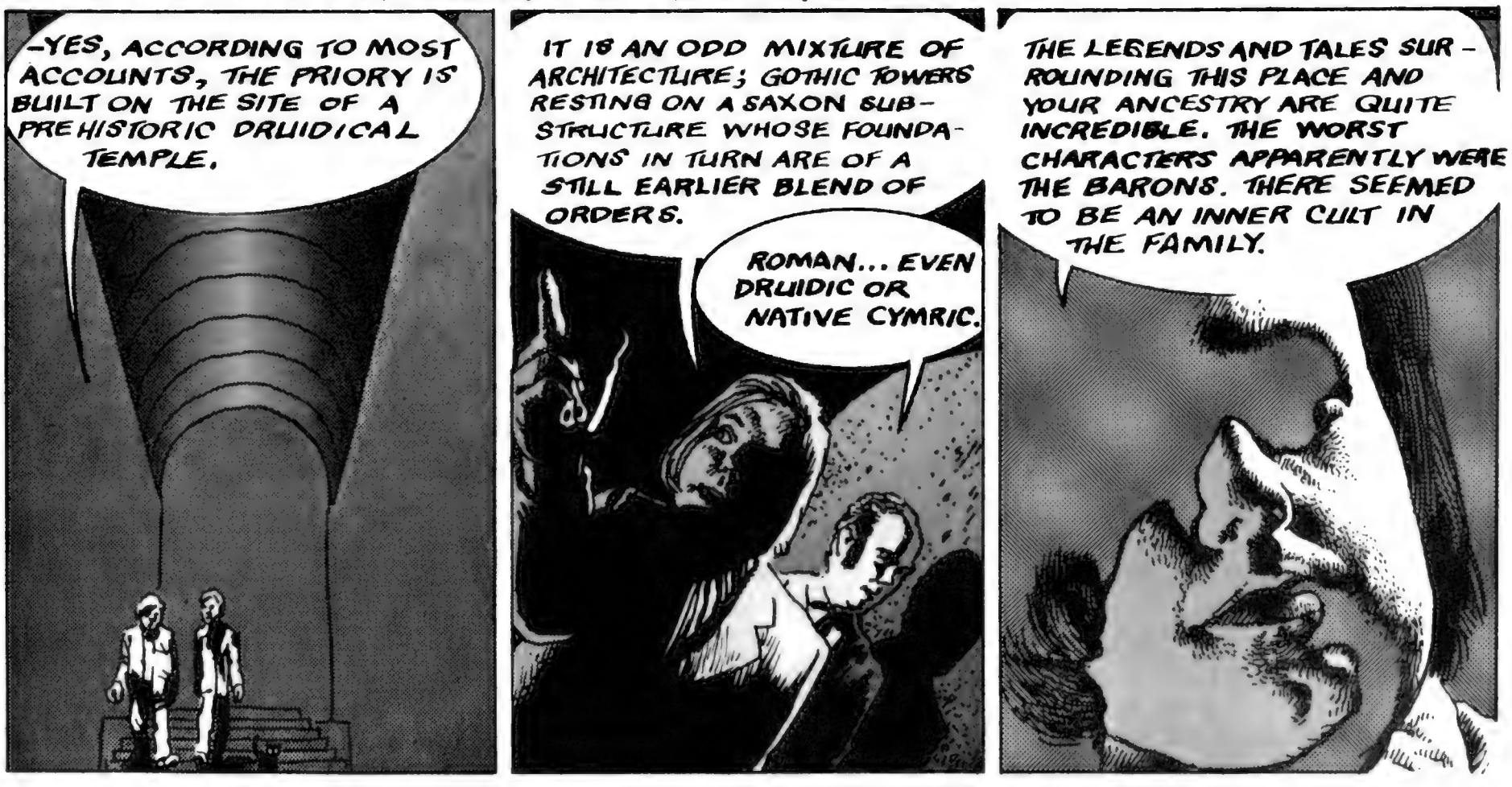
I AM THE LAST OF THE DELAPORES. THE NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES WILL BE RELIEVED UNDOUBTEDLY, WHEN THE DELAPORES ARE GONE FOREVER.

THE PEOPLE HAVE LONG HATED AND FEARED MY FAMILY THOUGH MY ANCESTORS HAD QUIT THE AREA MANY GENERATIONS AGO. I HADN'T LEARNED OF THE STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING WALTER DE LA POER'S FLIGHT TO AMERICA. IT WAS THEN HE CHANGED THE SPELLING TO DELAPORE.

My FOREBEAR RELATED NOTHING OF HIS CLOUDED PAST TO HIS CHILDREN OR GRANDCHILDREN. IT WAS MY SON, WHEN IN ENGLAND AS AN ARMY AVIATOR, WHO DISCOVERED THE EXISTENCE OF EXHAM PRIORY THROUGH HIS BRITISH FRIEND, CAPTAIN EDWARD NORRYS. IT SEEMS THAT THE RUINED ESTATE HAD FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF THE NORRYS FAMILY. MY SON, ALFRED, WROTE OF IT OFTEN.

His HOMECOMING WAS NOT A HAPPY ONE. THE WAR HAD SEVERLY MAIMED HIM, I CARED FOR MY BOY FOR 2 YEARS WHILE HE DIED SLOWLY.

With NO FAMILY LEFT, I RESOLVED TO BUY AND RESTORE THE ANCIENT EDIFICE. NORRYS TOOK AN INTEREST AND HELPED ME IN MY ENDEAVORS.


-YES, ACCORDING TO MOST ACCOUNTS, THE PRIORY IS BUILT ON THE SITE OF A PREHISTORIC DRUIDICAL TEMPLE.
IT IS AN ODD MIXTURE OF ARCHITECTURE; GOTHIC TOWERS RESTING ON A SAXON SUB-STRUCTURE WHOSE FOUNDATIONS IN TURN ARE OF A STILL EARLIER BLEND OF ORDERS.
ROMAN... EVEN DRUIDIC OR NATIVE CYMRIC.
THE LEGENDS AND TALES SURROUNDING THIS PLACE AND YOUR ANCESTRY ARE QUITE INCREDIBLE. THE WORST CHARACTERS APPARENTLY WERE THE BARONS. THERE SEEMED TO BE AN INNER CULT IN THE FAMILY.

GHASTLY, GRISLY BALLADS AND STORIES SURVIVE IN GUARDED WHISPERS. THERE WAS A MARY DE LA POER, WHO SHORTLY AFTER HER MARRIAGE TO THE EARL OF SHREWSFIELD... WAS KILLED BY HER BRIDEGROOM. THE SLAYER WAS ABSOLVED AND EVEN BLESSED BY A PRIEST WHEN THE VICTIMS HEATHEN HABITS WERE REVEALED. THERE WAS MENTION OF A SQUEALING WHITE THING ON WHICH SIR JOHN CLAVES HORSE HAD TROD... AND OF A SERVANT WHO WENT RAVING MAD AT WHAT HE SAW IN THE PRIORY IN FULL DAYLIGHT.

AND MOST VIVID OF ALL WAS THE EPIC OF THE RATS— THE SCAMPERING ARMY OF OBSCENE VERMIN WHICH BURST FORTH FROM THE CASTLE, THREE MONTHS AFTER YOUR ANCESTOR DESERTED THE COUNTRY. THE FILTHY RAVENOUS ARMY DEVOURED FOWL, CATS, DOGS, HOGS, ... EVEN TWO HAPLESS HUMANS.

TELL ME OF WALTER DE LA POER. WHY DID HE FLEE TO AMERICA?

THE ACCOUNTS ARE RATHER CIRCUMSTANTIAL ON THAT. HE WAS ACCUSED OF KILLING HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD WITH THE AID OF FOUR SERVANTS... THIS HAPPENED AFTER A SHOCKING DISCOVERY WHICH CHANGED HIS WHOLE DEMEANOR.

THE NATURE OF THIS DISCOVERY WAS NEVER BROUGHT TO LIGHT... WELL, I MUST GO NOW DELAPORE. I HOPE YOU'LL INVITE ME OVER AGAIN SOON.

WHAT'S THE MATTER? SETTLE DOWN!

RRROUR!

—YES SIR, ALL THE CATS WERE AMAZINGLY RESTLESS LAST NIGHT... AS IF EXCITED BY THE ODOR OF RATS!

PECULIAR! THERE HASN'T BEEN RATS IN EXHAM FOR 300 YEARS. ... SET SOME TRAPS!

AAAGH

MEOWRR

HISSS

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
SKITTER
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
RATS!! MILLIONS OF THEM!

NOTHING HERE... THE TRAPS ARE SPRUNG!... COME, WE'LL EXPLORE THE OTHER ROOMS
RRROURRR FST!

LORD! THEY'RE BEHIND THE PANELING!
SKITTER THUMP
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK

THE NOISE! THEY'RE TRAVELING DOWNWARD INTO THE SUBCELLAR!
THUMPITY
RATTLE
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
TWITTER
TWITTLE

SIR! ALL THE CATS ARE IN A SNARLING PANIC! THEY'VE RUN TO THE SUB-CELLAR DOOR!
THE RATS! DON'T YOU HEAR THEM?

RATS?... WE HEARD NOTHING BUT THE CATS SIR.

—IT WAS AWFUL LAST NIGHT. COULD YOU COME AND SPEND TONIGHT HERE NORRYS? I MUST DISCOVER THE CAUSE OF THIS MANIFESTATION!

THIS VAULT, THE LOWEST ROOM IN THE PRIORY, WAS BUILT BY ROMAN HANDS...
PASSING THE NIGHT DOWN HERE, WE WON'T MISS YOUR RATS... IF THEY APPEAR.

THESE INSCRIPTIONS— "ATYS..." THOSE HIDEOUS EASTERN RITES.

AEC VS DONTIFI ATYS

GAUGH!!

MROWRRRRR

ROWRRRR

DELAPORE! WHAT IS IT?

HSSST FFTT

MEOWWWW

THE RATS! THEY DESCEND FURTHER YET!

MEOWRRR

HUH? I HEAR ONLY THE CATS!

RRAWRRR

ARE YOU DEAF?... ... NOW THE SCURRYING SUBSIDES!

YOUR CAT SMELLS SOMETHING BELOW THIS PRE ROMAN ALTAR!

LOOK AT THE CANDLE!

THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY A CHAMBER BELOW YOUR SUBCELLAR. PERHAPS JUST A NARROW FISSURE THAT EXTENDS FROM THE CLIFFS FACE.

I CANNOT LEAVE MATTERS AS THEY ARE... I MUST KNOW.

I SUGGEST WE CONTACT SOME ARCHAEOLOGIST AND SCIENTIST FRIENDS OF MINE. I'M SURE THEY'D LIKE TO BE IN ON THIS.

ALL OF CAPTAIN NORRYS' FRIENDS HAVE ARRIVED SIR.

GOOD. PUT THEM IN THE GARDEN WING. WE'LL BEGIN THE EXPLORATION TOMORROW... I FEEL MYSELF POISED ON THE BRINK OF FRIGHTFUL REVELATIONS.

THE DREAMS AGAIN!

WHAT IS HE DOING?

A-HA-- AS I THOUGHT. THERE IS A COUNTER-WEIGHT; THE ALTAR SWINGS BACK.

... UTTERLY FANTASTIC.

I'M AFRAID THESE BONES AREN'T QUITE HUMAN.

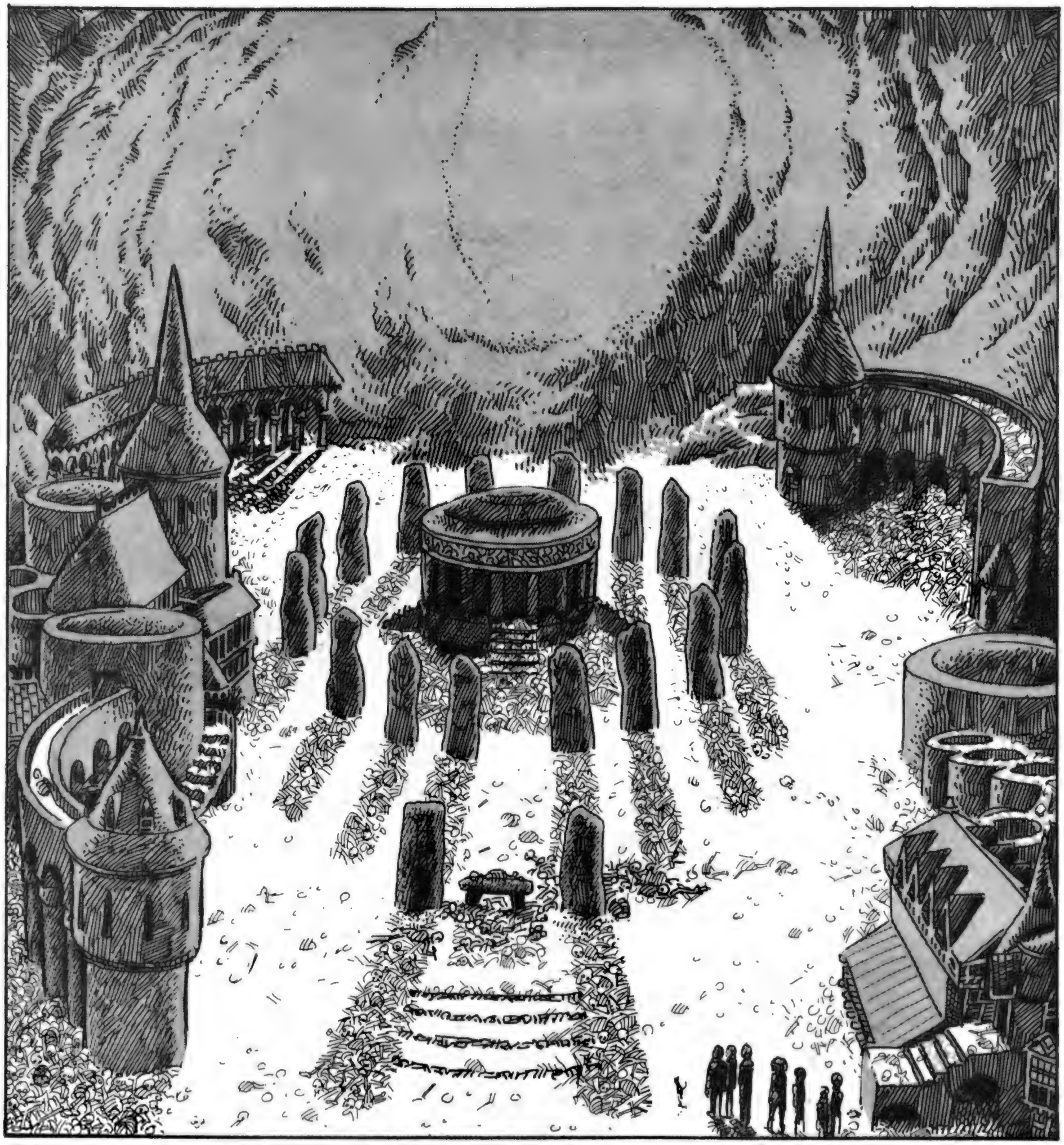
THEY LOOK AS THOUGH THEY WERE TRYING TO ESCAPE!

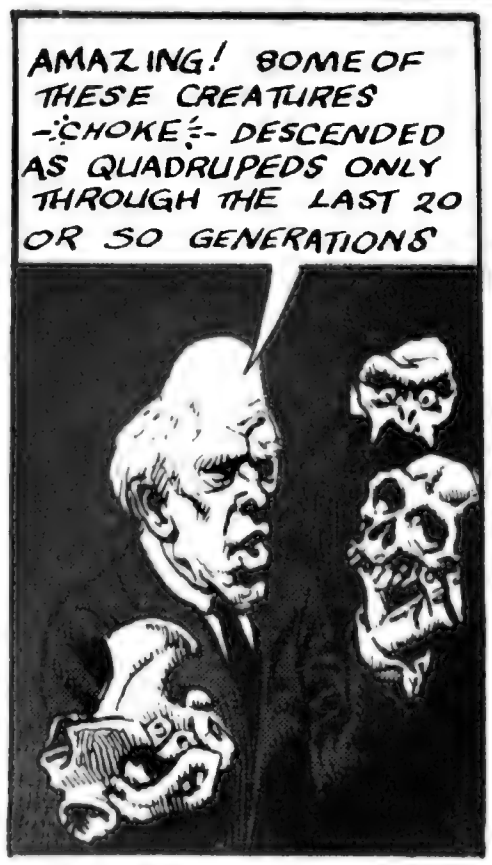
HMMM!... THIS PASSAGE— THE CHISEL STROKES... WERE CARVED FROM BENEATH!

A DIM LIGHT AHEAD!

MY GOD!!

CHOKE!




AMAZING! SOME OF THESE CREATURES -CHOKE- DESCENDED AS QUADRUPEDS ONLY THROUGH THE LAST 20 OR SO GENERATIONS

THEY WERE APPARENTLY KEPT IN THESE STONE PENS -- BUT BROKE LOOSE DRIVEN BY HUNGER OR FEAR!

THESE MARKINGS DESCRIBE A RITUAL ... LORD!!... THEY ... ATE...

GAG-KOFF
IT'S AN ENGLISH BUTCHER SHOP... BUT...

THESE BONES ARE HUMAN
N-NO... NOOOO! IT'S...
THE DE LA POER CREST. ...ONE OF MY ANCESTORS STOPPED BY THE DAGGER OF WALTER DE LA POER.
WHAT LIES IN THESE BLACK PITS?!!
THE RATS— THEY'RE RETURNING! THE RATS!
THEY'LL EAT ANOTHER DE LA POER; —BECAUSE DE LA POER EATS FORBIDDEN THINGS! THERE'S A PIG THING! EAT!!
IS IT EDWARD NORRYS' FAT FACE ON THAT FUNGUS THING? HE LIVED; BUT MY BOY DIED! SHALL A NORRYS HOLD THE LANDS OF A DE LA POER?
CURSE YOU!!

'SBLOOD, THOU STINKARD,... WOLDE YE SWYNK ME THILKE WYS?...

MAGNA MATER! ... ATYS... DIA AGHAIDS 'S—

AGUS BAS DUNACH ORT! DHONAS'S DHOLAS ORT, AGUS LEAT-SA!...

UNGL... UNGL... RRLH...CHCHCH...

IT'S DELAPORE! ... AND NORRYS —GOD DAMN!

HE HE HE HE HE!

THE FOOLS! NOW THEY'VE BLOWN UP EXHAM PRIORY, TAKEN MY CAT FROM ME... THEY ACCUSE ME OF A HIDEOUS THING,... BUT IT WASN'T ME... IT WAS THE RATS... THE RATS NEVER LET ME SLEEP ... THE DAEMON RATS BECKON ME DOWN TO GREATER HORRORS ... THE RATS... THE RATS IN THE WALLS.

THE END

ADAPTED BY GORE 1972

THE RATS IN THE WALLS

IN JULY 1923, I MOVED INTO THE RESTOH'D **EXHAM PRIORY.** THE ANCIENT ESTATE HAD BEEN THE ORIGINAL HOME OF THE DE LA POE' FAMILY, MY ANCESTA'S. DESPITE ALL THE RESTO'ATIVE WORK, THE AUTHO'ITIES HAVE ORDE'D THE STRUCTUA' DESTROYED AND ALL TRACES OBLITERATED THIS WEEK.

I AM THE LAST OF THE DELAPOE'S. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES WILL BE RELIEVED WHEN THE DELAPOE'S ARE GONE FOREVA'.

THEY HAVE LONG HATED AND FEA'D MY FAMILY, THOUGH MY PROGENITA' HAD MOVED TO VIRGINIA MANY GENERATIONS AGO. I DIDN'T KNOW OF THE STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDIN' WALTA' DE LA POE'S FLIGHT TO AMERICA. IT WAS THEN HE CHANGED THE SPELLIN' TO DELAPOE'.

MY FOREBEA' RELATED NOTHING OF HIS CLOUDED PAST TO HIS DESCENDENTS. IT WAS MY SON, WHILE IN ENGLAND AS AN AH'MY AVIATA', WHO DISCOVA'D THE EXISTENCE OF EXHAM PRIORY THROUGH HIS BRITISH FRIEND, EDWAHD NOHYS. IT SEEMS THAT THE RUINED ESTATE HAD FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF THE NOHYS FAMILY. MY SON HAD WRITTEN OF IT OFTEN.

HIS HOMECOMIN' WAS NOT A HAPPY ONE. THE WAH HAD MAIMED HIM. I CARED FO' MY BOY FO' TWO YEA'HS; THEN HE DIED.

WITH NO FAMILY LEFT, I RESOLVED TO BUY AND RESTO' THE ANCIENT EDIFICE. NOHYS TOOK AN INTEREST AND HELPED ME IN MY ENDEAVA'S. HIS FRIENDLINESS WAS SU'TINLY NOT TYPICAL OF THE OTHER SULLEN NATIVES.

ACCORDING TO MOST ACCOUNTS, THE PRIORY IS BUILT ON THE SITE OF A PREHISTORIC ***DRUID*** TEMPLE.
IT IS AN ***ODD*** MIXTURE OF ARCHITECTURE--GOTHIC TOWERS RESTING ON A SAXON SUBSTRUCTURE WHOSE FOUNDATIONS IN TURN ARE OF A STILL EARLIER BLEND OF ORDERS.
ROMAN...EVEN DRUID OR NATIVE CYMRIC.
THERE IS A VAGUE LINK BETWEEN OUR FAMILIES. THE LEGENDS AND TALES SURROUNDING THIS PLACE AND YOUR ANCESTRY ARE QUITE ***INCREDIBLE.*** THE WORST CHARACTERS WERE THE ***BARONS.*** APPARENTLY, THERE WAS AN INNER CULT WITHIN THE FAMILY.

GRISLY STORIES SURVIVE IN GUARDED WHISPERS. A MARY DE LA POER MARRIED THE EARL OF SHREWSFIELD. HE ***KILLED*** HER, BUT WAS ABSOLVED OF ALL GUILT BY THE CHURCH WHEN HER HORRIBLE HABITS WERE REVEALED.

THERE WAS MENTION OF A SQUEALING WHITE ***THING*** WHICH SIR JOHN CLAVE ENCOUNTERED IN THE DAMP, STENCH-FILLED GRAVEYARD.

THEN THERE WAS THE SERVANT WHO WENT ***RAVING MAD*** AT WHAT HE SAW IN THE PRIORY IN FULL DAYLIGHT.

BUT THE MOST VIVID HORROR OF ALL WAS THE EPIC OF THE ***RATS***--A SCAMPERING ARMY OF THE OBSCENE VERMIN. THEY BURST FORTH FROM THE CASTLE THREE MONTHS AFTER YOUR ANCESTOR DESERTED IT. THE FILTHY RAVENOUS MASS DEVOURED FOWL, CATS, DOGS, HOGS--***EVEN TWO HAPLESS PEASANTS.***

WHAT ABOUT WALTA' DE LA POE'? *WHY* DID HE FLEE TO AMERICA?

THE ACCOUNTS ARE RATHER CIRCUMSTANTIAL ON THAT. HE WAS ACCUSED OF *KILLING* HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD WITH THE AID OF FOUR SERVANTS. THIS HAPPENED AFTER A SHOCKING DISCOVERY WHICH CHANGED HIS WHOLE DEMEANOR.

THE NATURE OF THIS DISCOVERY WAS NEVER BROUGHT TO LIGHT. WELL, I MUST GO NOW, SETH. THE ROAST PORK WAS *EXQUISITE.* I HOPE YOU'LL INVITE ME AGAIN SOON.

UGH. THE DAMP AIA' HAS AMPLIFIED THE UNDA'TONE OF FETID *FOULNESS*--EH? *SHUT UP, CAT!*

RRROUR!

SIR, ALL THE CATS WERE AMAZINGLY RESTLESS LAST NIGHT. AS IF EXCITED BY THE ODOR OF RATS.

PECULIA'. THERE HAVEN'T BEEN RATS IN EXHAM FO' *THREE HUNDRED YEA'S.* SET SOME TRAPS.

WHAT HAD WALTA' DE LA POE' WITNESSED THAT SENT HIM SLAUGHTERIN' HIS FAMILY--? HMM--

AAAGH

MEOWRRR

HISSSS

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
SKITTER
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
RATS!! MILLIONS OF THEM!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
I COULD *SWEA'* THIS TAPESTRY WAS MOVING. THE TRAPS ARE SPRUNG. WHAT ABOUT THE OTHA' ROOMS?
RRROURRR FST!
LORD GAWD ALMIGHTY! THEY'S BEHIND THE PANELING!
SKITTER THUMP
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
THE NOISE IS *DEAF'NIN'*. THEY'S TRAVELIN' DOWN TOWA'D THE CELLA'.
THUMPITY
RATTLE
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
TWITTER
TWITTLE
SIR! THE CATS ARE ALL IN A SNARLING PANIC. THEY'VE RUN TO THE SUBCELLAR DOOR.
THE *RATS!* DON'T YOU *HEA'* THEM?
RATS? WE HEARD NO RATS, SIR--JUST THE CATS.
IT WAS AWFUL, NOHYS. COME AND SPEND THE NIGHT. HELP ME DISCOVA' THE CAUSE OF THIS MANIFESTATION.
THIS VAULT, THE LOWEST IN THE PRIORY, WAS BUILT BY ROMAN HANDS. MUSTY AND DAMP. JUST BEING HERE MAKES ME FEEL *UNEASY*. BUT WE WON'T MISS YOUR RATS-- IF THEY APPEAR.
THESE INSCRIPTIONS-- "ATYS"--THOSE *HIDEOUS* EASTERN RITES.

GAUGH!!

MROWRRRR

ROWRRRR

DELAPORE! WHAT IS IT?

HSSST

FFFT

ME OWNA

THE *RATS!* THEY DESCEND *FURTHAH YET!*

MEOWRRR

ALL I CAN HEAR IS YOUR HOWLING CAT.

RRAWRRR

AH' YOU *DEAF?* --OH, NOW THE SOUND SUBSIDES.

HE SMELLS SOMETHING BELOW THIS PRE-ROMAN ALTAR.

LOOK AT THE CANDLE!

THERE'S OBVIOUSLY A CHAMBER BELOW THIS ONE. PERHAPS JUST A NARROW FISSURE EXTENDING FROM THE CLIFF FACE.

I CANNOT LEAVE MATTA'S AS THEY AH'. I MUST *KNOW.*

I SUGGEST WE CONTACT SOME ARCHEOLOGIST AND SCIENTIST FRIENDS OF MINE. I'M SURE THEY'D LIKE TO BE IN ON THIS.

SOON--

ALL OF BARON NORRYS'S FRIENDS HAVE ARRIVED, SIR.

GOOD. PUT THEM IN THE GAH'DEN WING. WE'LL BEGIN THE EXPLORATION TOMORRA'. I FEEL I'M POISED ON THE BRINK OF *FRIGHTFUL* REVELATIONS.

THAT NIGHT, THE UNWHOLESOME DREAMS AGAIN--

BY ELEVEN THE NEXT DAY, THE EXPERTS WERE EXAMINING THE ANCIENT ALTA'. SIR WILLIAM BRINTON MEASUHED THE STONE.

AH HA! AS I THOUGHT. THERE IS A COUNTER WEIGHT. THE ALTAR SWINGS OPEN.

--UTTERLY FANTASTIC.

I'M AFRAID THEY'RE NOT QUITE HUMAN.

GHASTLY PILES OF BONES! HUNDREDS OF SKELETONS. SPRAWLED IN ATTITUDES OF PANIC AND FEAR.

THIS PASSAGEWAY CARVED FROM SOLID ROCK--FROM BELOW!

ALL APPEA' TO HAVE BEEN GNAWED BY--RODENTS.

A DIM LIGHT AHEAD--

MY GOD!

CHOKE!

A TWILIGHT GROTTO OF ENOHMOUS SIZE, FADIN' INTO MISTY DEPTHS.

AND EVEH'WHERE, A TERRIBLE CARPETIN' OF BONES.

AMAZING! ***A BAFFLING*** DEGRADED MIXTURE OF CHARACTERISTICS. EVOLUTIONARILY LOWER THAN PILTDOWN MAN, A PRIMITIVE SEMI-APE SPECIES. EXTENSIVE SIGNS OF ***GNAWING*** BY ***RATS*** AND--***EACH OTHER!*** PUDGY, ***PIGGISH*** CREATURES.

--PERHAPS KEPT IN THESE STONE PITS, BUT THEY BROKE LOOSE, DRIVEN BY HUNGER OR ***FEAR.***

THESE MARKINGS DESCRIBE A RITUAL FEAST--***LORD!*** THEY ATE--

GAG-KOFF

IT'S A MEDIEVAL BUTCHER SHOP--BUT--***ERRGH--***

THESE BONES AHN'T PRIMITIVE BUT HUMAN.

NOOO! IT'S--

THE DE LA POE' CREST. ONE OF MY ANCESTA'S STOPPED BY THE DAGGAH OF WALTA' DE LA POE'.

BELOW ARE MORE HORRAHS. WHAT LIES IN THESE BLACK PITS WHERE MY FAMILY KEPT THEH' FOOD?

THE RATS, THEY' RETURNING! THE RATS!

THE RATS!

THEY'LL EAT ANOTHER DE LA POE', BECAUSE A DE LA POE' EATS FO'BIDDEN THINGS. THEH'S A PIG THING! EAT!!

IS IT EDWAHD NOHYS' FAT FACE ON THAT FUNGOUS THING? HE LIVED BUT MY BOY DIED. SHALL A NOHYS HOLD THE LAND OF DE LA POE'? DAMN YOU!

CURSE YOU!!

WE *ALWAYS* GREW OU'AH OWN *FOOD.*

--KEPT 'EM IN THE PITS.

BACK THROUGH RECO'DED HISTORY, WE *ATE* THEM-- AND *BEYOND*--

UNGL--UNGL-- ***WWLH!*** *CHCHCH!*

OH MY *GOD!* IT'S DELAPORE!--AND NORRYS *CHOKE!*

HEE, HEE, HEE, HEE!

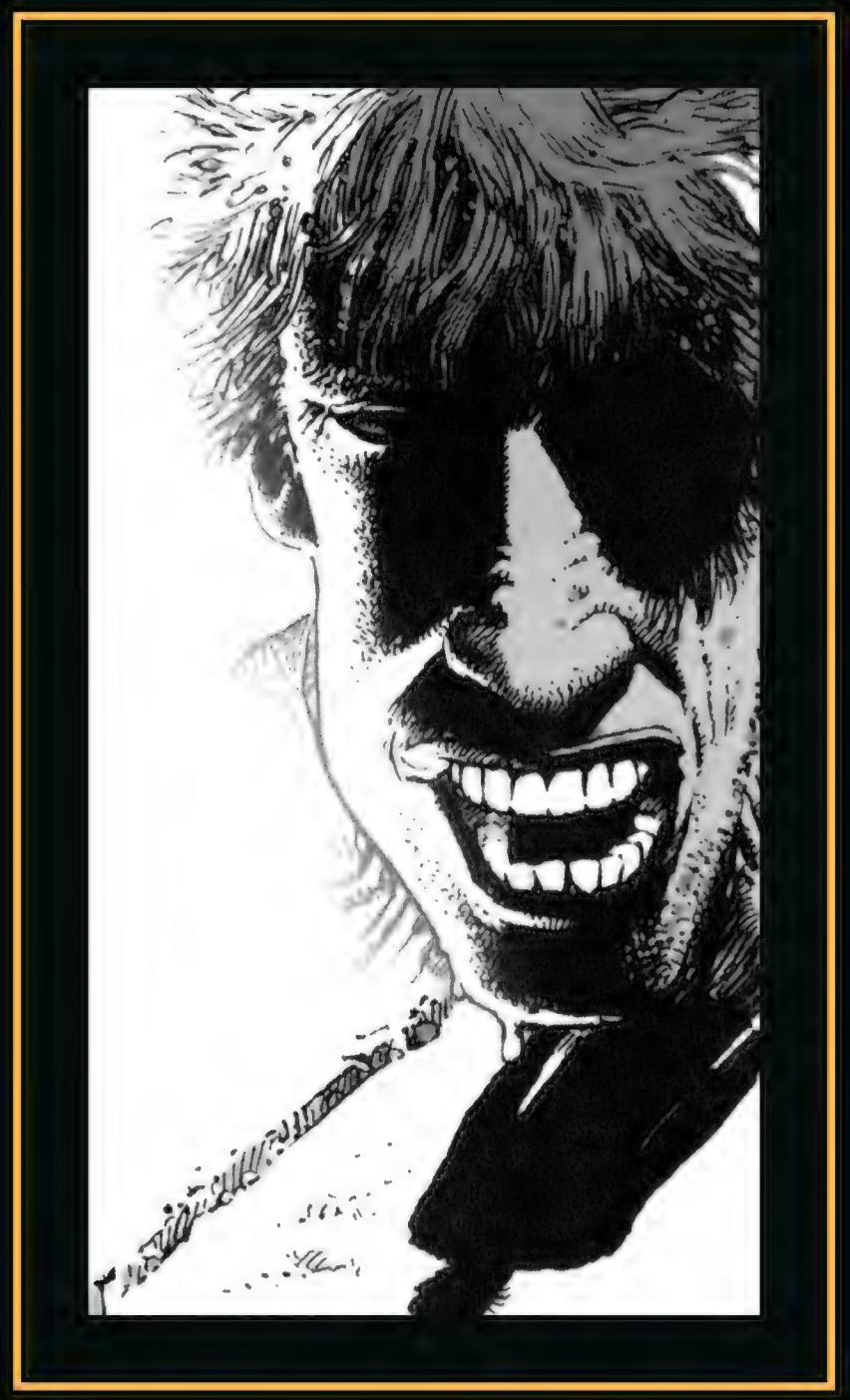
THE ***FOOLS!*** *NOW THEY'VE BLOWN UP EXHAM PRIORY, MY HOME. THEY SAID MY FAMILY KEPT SUBHUMANS TO EAT--SAID I ATE NOHYS, THAT* ***PIG.*** *HE WAS AN ACTUAL DIRECT DESCENDENT OF OUR PIGGY STOCK. BUT I DIDN'T EAT HIM. IT WAS THE* ***RATS.*** *THE RATS NEVAH LET ME SLEEP. THE* ***DAEMON RATS*** *BECKON ME DOWN TO GREATA' HORRAHS. THE* ***RATS!*** *THE* ***RATS*** *IN THE* ***WALLS!***

THE END

ADAPTED BY GORE 1972

HERBERT WEST: REANIMATOR
PART 1: FROM THE DARK

THE FOLLOWING PAGES PRESENT "HERBERT WEST: REANIMATOR, PART 1: FROM THE DARK," ADAPTED BY RICHARD CORBEN FROM THE H. P. LOVECRAFT STORY.



Herbert West: Reanimator

by H.P. Lovecraft

Part One: **From the Dark**

adapted & illustrated by Richard Corben

Of Herbert West, who was my friend, I can speak only with extreme terror. This terror is not due altogether to the sinister manner of his recent disappearance, but was engendered by the whole nature of his life-work, and first gained its acute form more than seventeen years ago, when we were at the Miskatonic University Medical School in Arkham. The first horrible incident of our acquaintance was the greatest shock I ever experienced. West had already made himself notorious through his wild theories on the nature of death and the possibility of overcoming it artificially. In his experiments he had actually obtained signs of life in animals supposedly dead.

ALMOST. BUT NOT QUITE.
ALL LIFE IS A CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL PROCESS. THE SO-CALLED "SOUL" IS A *MYTH!*
THE *SUPREME GOAL* IS RECREATING HUMAN LIFE! I *CAN* DO IT.
THE LEARNED DR. HALSEY HAS DEBARRED ME FROM FURTHER EXPERIMENTS AT THE SCHOOL. MY WORK IS FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO BE STOPPED BY A PACK OF *FOOLS*.
I MUST GET FRESH HUMAN BODIES SOMEHOW – AND CONTINUE THE EXPERIMENTS IN *SECRET*.

I was by this time his active assistant, and helped him make decisions concerning a suitable place for our loathsome work.

THE CHAPMAN FARMHOUSE. IT'S BEEN DESERTED FOR YEARS.

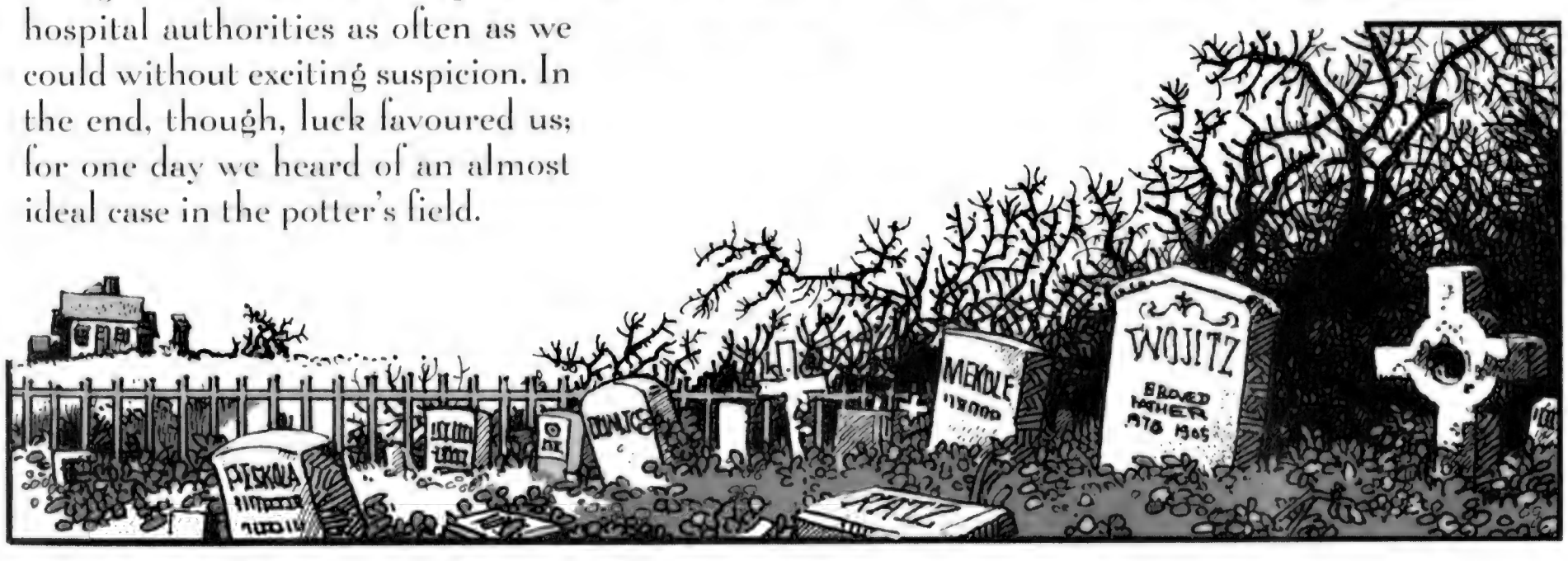
IT'S FAR FROM ANY ROAD, AND IN SIGHT OF NO OTHER HOUSE.

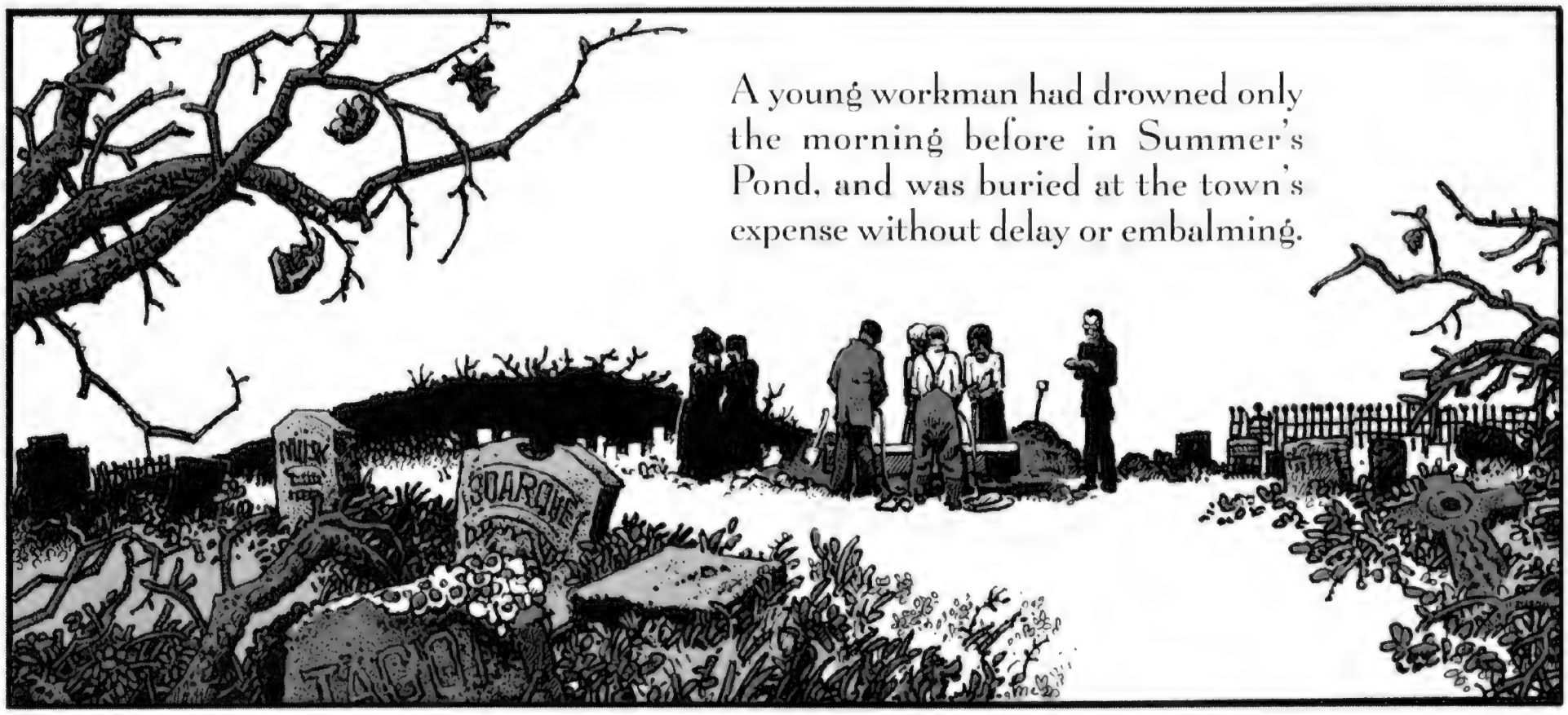
We fitted up an operating room and a laboratory which we equipped with materials purchased in Boston or quietly borrowed from the college.

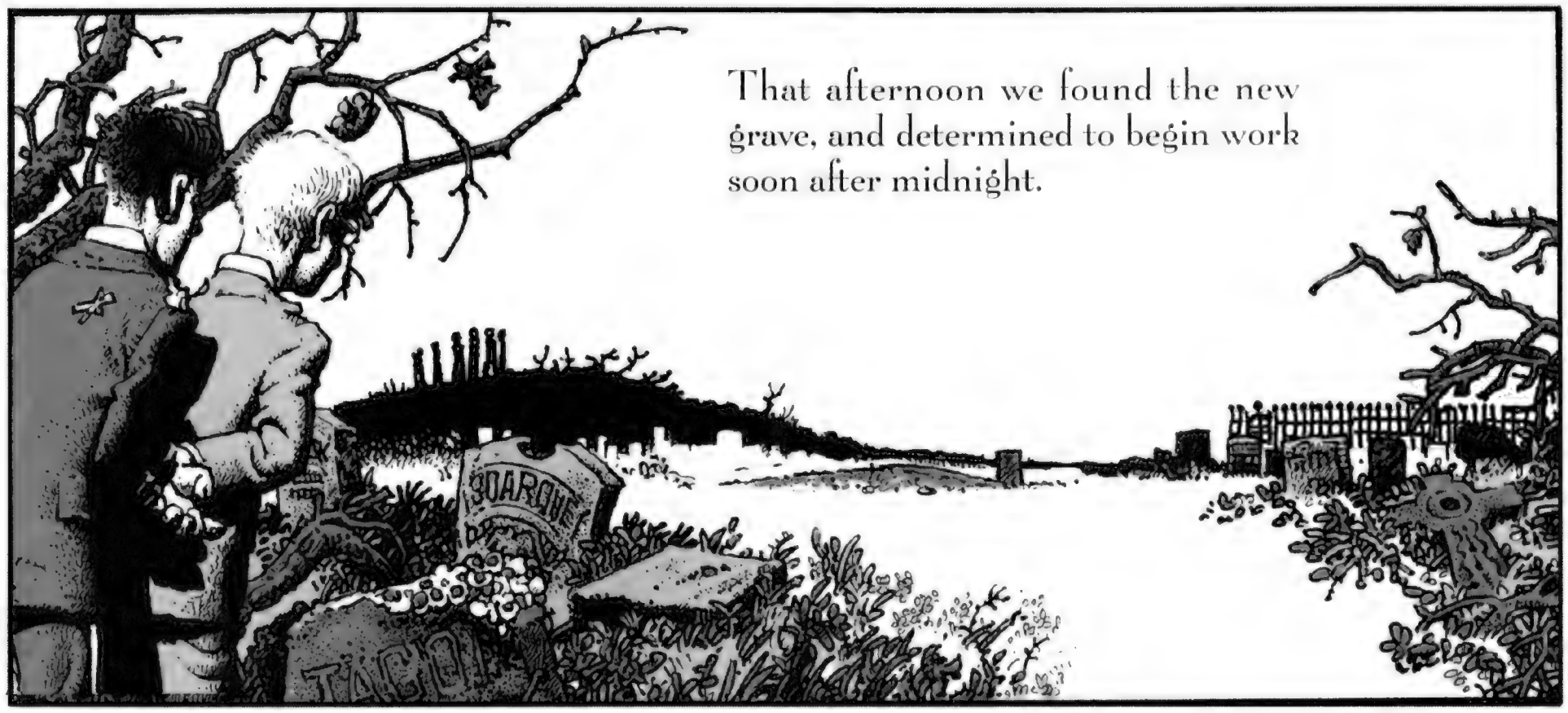
ALL WE NEED NOW IS A BODY. IT MUST BE *FRESH* AND WITHOUT EMBALMING.

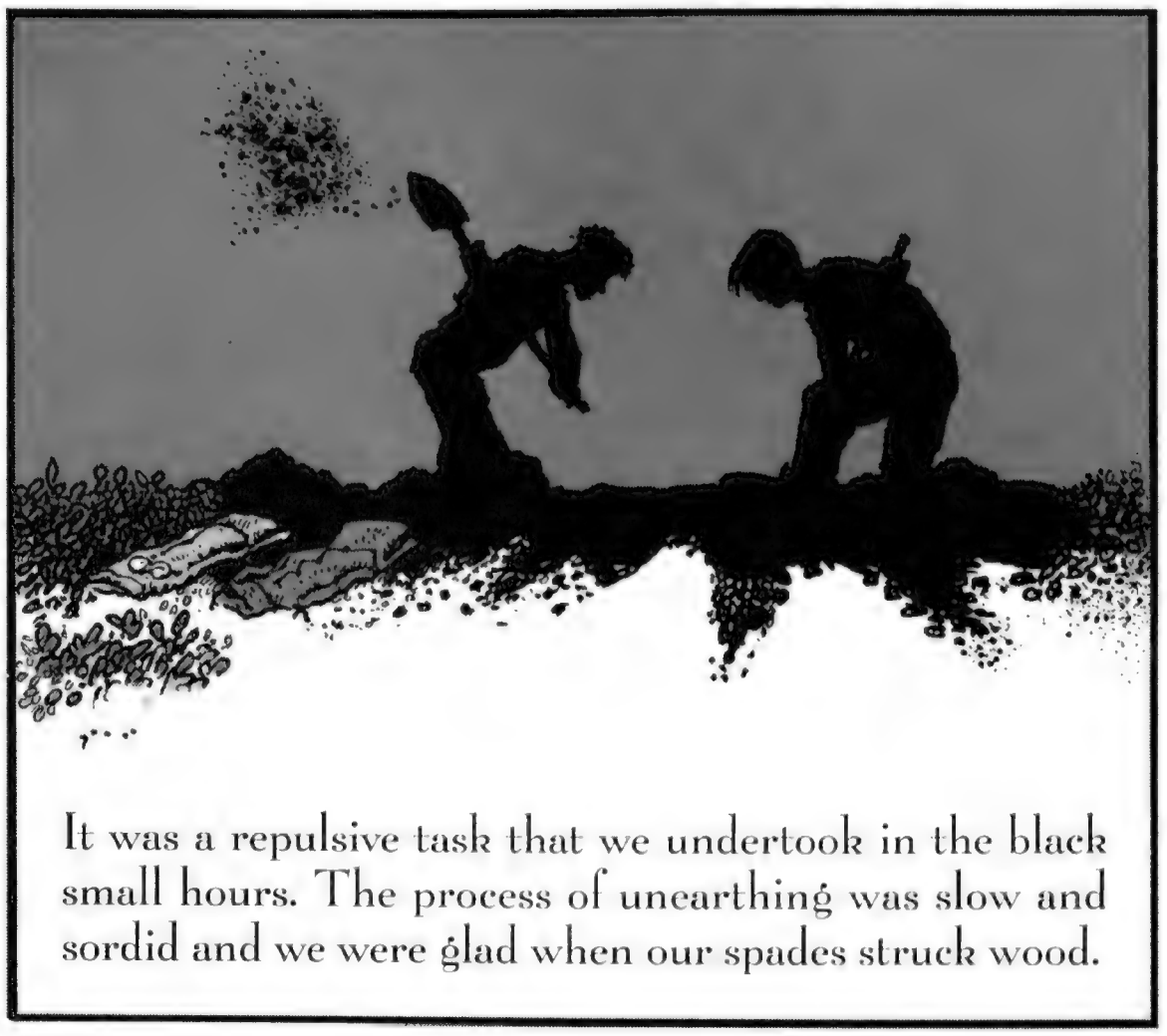
Precautions were necessary, since rumours of strange lights and midnight activities would soon bring disaster on our enterprise. We provided spades and picks for the many burials we should have to make in the cellar.

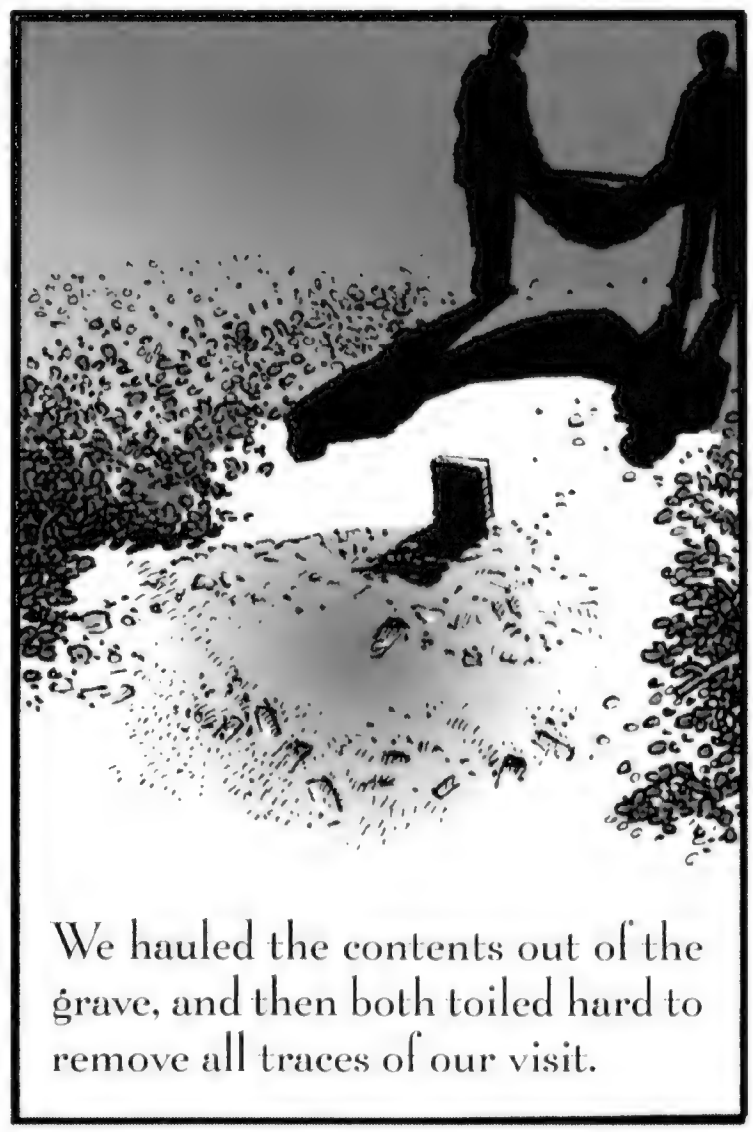
We followed the local death-notices like ghouls. Not for many weeks did we hear of anything suitable; though we talked with morgue and hospital authorities as often as we could without exciting suspicion. In the end, though, luck favoured us; for one day we heard of an almost ideal case in the potter's field.

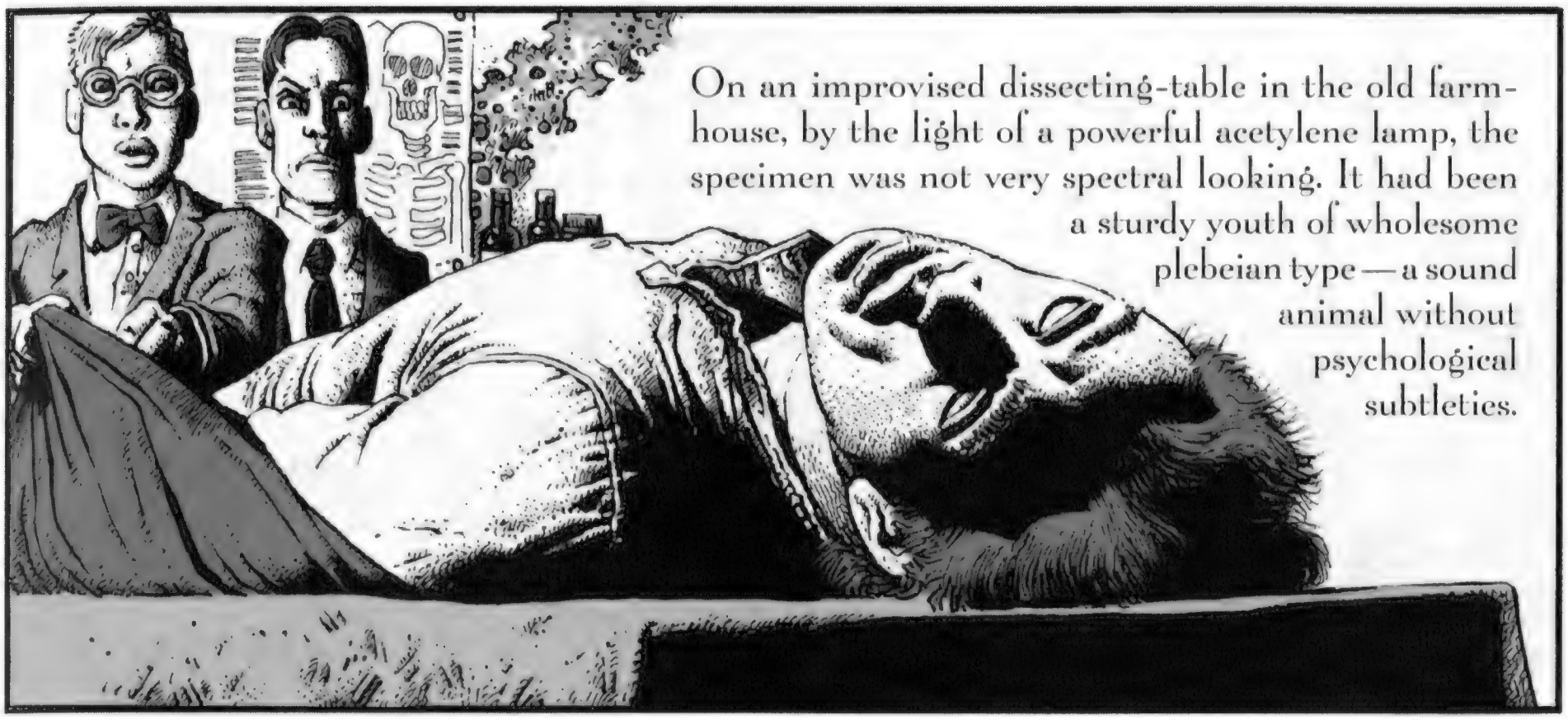


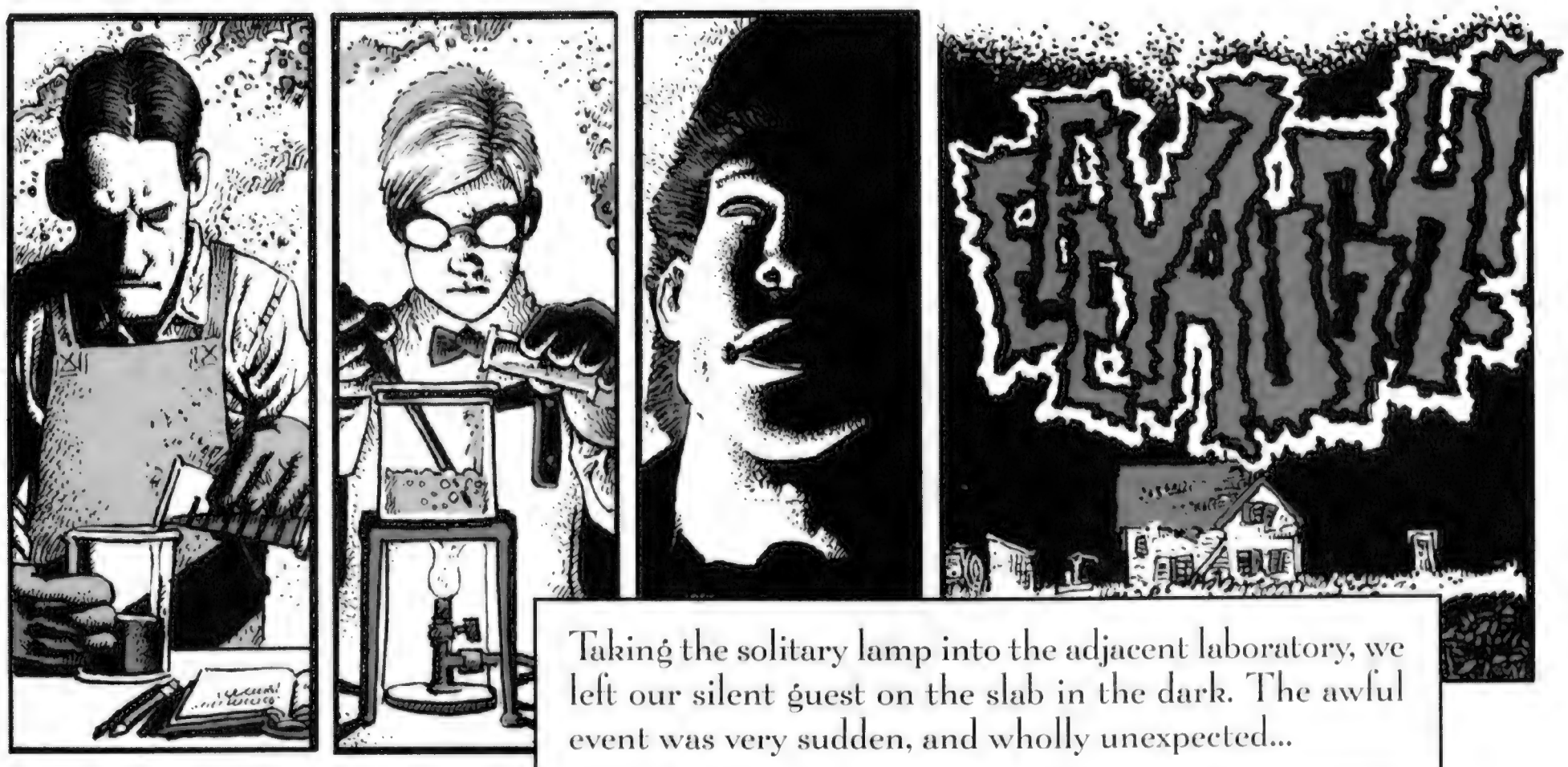

A young workman had drowned only the morning before in Summer's Pond, and was buried at the town's expense without delay or embalming.


That afternoon we found the new grave, and determined to begin work soon after midnight.


It was a repulsive task that we undertook in the black small hours. The process of unearthing was slow and sordid and we were glad when our spades struck wood.

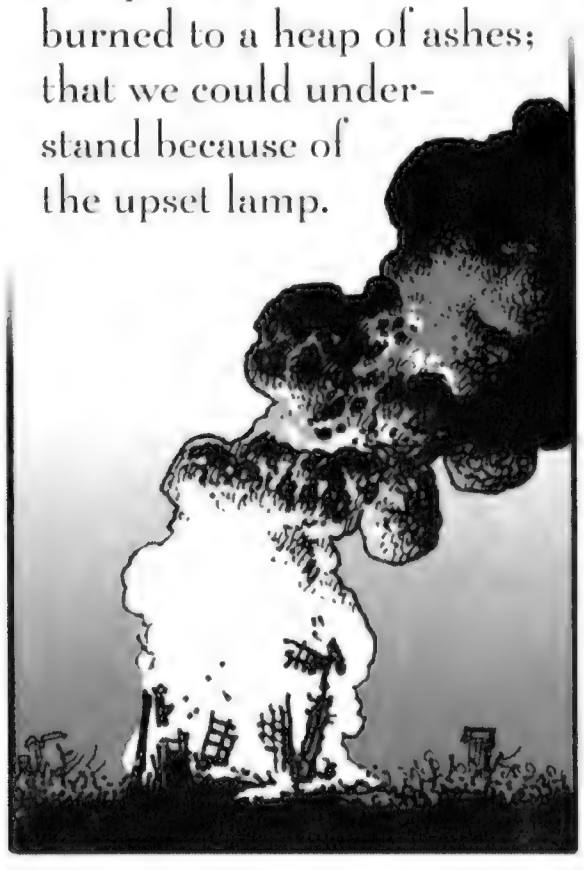

We hauled the contents out of the grave, and then both toiled hard to remove all traces of our visit.


On an improvised dissecting-table in the old farm-house, by the light of a powerful acetylene lamp, the specimen was not very spectral looking. It had been a sturdy youth of wholesome plebeian type — a sound animal without psychological subtleties.
The tension on our part became very great. We knew that there was scarcely a chance for anything like complete success, and could not avoid fears at possible grotesque results of partial animation. I, myself, still held some curious notions about the traditional "soul" of man, and felt an awe at the secrets that might be told by one returning from the dead.
West was calmer than I as he forced a large quantity of his fluid into a vein of the body's arm, immediately binding the incision securely.
The waiting was gruesome, but West never faltered. Every now and then he applied his stethoscope to the specimen, and bore the negative results philosophically. We had that afternoon dug a grave in the cellar, and would have to fill it by dawn — for we wished to shun even the remotest risk of discovery.
IT'S BEEN NEARLY AN HOUR. THE SOLUTION WAS *INADEQUATE*. WE MUST TRY A CHANGE IN THE FORMULA.

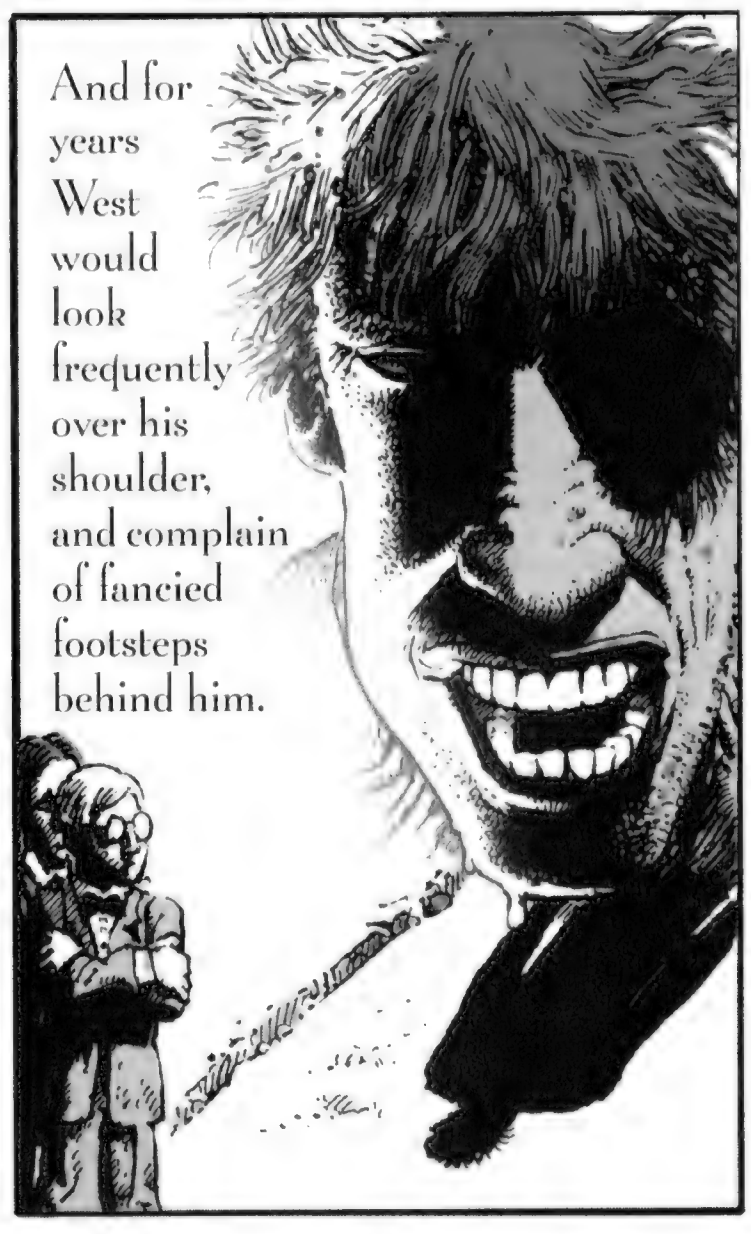

AAAUGH!
Taking the solitary lamp into the adjacent laboratory, we left our silent guest on the slab in the dark. The awful event was very sudden, and wholly unexpected...

Not more unutterable could have been the chaos of hellish sound if the pit itself had opened to release the agony of the damned. I think we screamed ourselves as we stumbled frantically toward the town.
AWWRLL!!

That evening two items in the paper, wholly unrelated, made it impossible for us to sleep. The old Chapman house had been burned to a heap of ashes; that we could understand because of the upset lamp.



Also, an attempt had been made to disturb a new grave in the potter's field, as if by futile and spadeless clawing at the earth.



©2002 RICHARD CORBEN

ABOUT LOVECRAFT AND CORBEN

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA

At the beginning of his long and prolific career, Richard Corben contributed to several underground comics anthologies where he created some of his most memorable stories. Each of these series had a different thematic emphasis; for example, *Slow Death* featured science-fiction eco-apocalyptic tales. Although they were also featured in other publications, most of his earliest horror stories appeared in *Skull Comics*. Conceived by editor and artist Gary Arlington—often called "the patron saint of underground comix"—as an uncensored 1960s take on EC Comics, *Skull* sought out fresh talent from fanzines. Impressed by Corben's bold storytelling, Arlington invited him to contribute. In exchange for a stack of EC Comics, Corben provided a humorous horror story, "Lame Lem's Love," in issue two (1970), marking the beginning of his work in the underground press.

He also introduced a macabre cartoony host in the EC tradition—Gurgy Tate, a hooded figure with a grotesquely large nose who framed the narratives, providing sarcastic commentary. Later, for *Grim Wit*, he designed the cadaverous Horrilor, while his own anthology, *Fantagor*, featured two monstrous conjoined twins with a single body as its namesake hosts. All three were "immortalized" in a group portrait on the cover of a hardback collection: *Richard Corben's Funny Book* (1976). This volume included both "Lame Lem's Love" and the story Corben illustrated for issue three of *Skull*, another darkly comic tale with an alliterative title: "Horrible Harvey's House!"

After these three issues of grim yet playful horror, *Skull* shifted direction. Issues four and five became adaptations of H. P. Lovecraft's stories, adopting a more serious tone. Various notable artists contributed, including Spain Rodriguez and Jack Jackson, but Corben's take on "The Rats in the Walls" in issue five stood out in a class of its own. He delivered a true classic by combining the startling realism of drawing from photo references of people with his unparalleled ability to render grotesque creatures and exaggerated figures.

In the 1950s, EC Comics had been the first comics company to adapt stories by H. P. Lovecraft in their horror and science-fiction anthologies *Vault of Horror* and *Weird Science*. In 1968, the Warren magazine *Creepy*, which, like *Skull*, was inspired by the EC style of comics, published an adaptation of "The Rats in the Walls" in its twenty-first issue. This version, which was also ten pages, was competently illustrated by Bob Jenney, and it took a lot of liberties with the story. Corben's later version, on the other hand, follows the original text carefully, even if the story had to be condensed due to space restrictions.

Like his previous masterpiece, "The Story of Rowlf," Corben rendered "The Rats in the Walls" in stark, meticulous black and white, employing screen tones for grays. Its splash page features an unforgettable, daring vertical panel of the protagonist, Delapore, between two walls of his mansion. Pages two and three consist mainly of flashbacks to family history, culminating in an extraordinary panel depicting a man being consumed by rats in the final panel. At the bottom of page four, Delapore is experiencing a nightmare, and Corben illustrates this sequence as a series of cinematic vertical panels. Years later, Corben would adopt a similar approach in his masterful adaptation of Poe's "The Oval Portrait."

Page seven showcases another memorable central panel: a party of experts descends into the forgotten chamber, discovering the ground covered with skeletons. The contrast between the realistic figures of the men, finely drawn and shaded, and the skeletons and black cat, which are boldly inked with a brush, is startling. Upon turning the page, the half splash on page eight is rendered in a markedly different style, much less realistic and, instead, evocative of a fairy tale. Chaos ensues on pages nine and ten: As Delapore finally loses his mind, his distorted visions and reality intermingle, leading to a surprise on the last page. At the center of this is a grotesque and unexpected climax to the story, rendered meticulously in pen and screen tone. It is an apotheosis of all those shocking endings that EC Comics executed so effectively, with the outrageous goriness that only underground comics would allow. In stark contrast, the final panel features a photorealistic image of Delapore in a padded cell, reminiscent of the ending of the film *Psycho* (1960), bringing us back to the stark reality we saw on page one, framing the story as a terrifying nightmare.

Like the rest of the Lovecraft adaptations in the *Skull* issues, there were no humorous hosts to introduce each tale, but the mischievous Gurgy Tate returned in the sixth and final issue of the series. For the first time in this comic, Tom Veitch wrote an issue-long story, "A Gothic Tale." Greg Irons illustrated the first half, and Corben drew the latter part and back cover. It is a macabre, outrageous concoction and most definitely a transgressive product of its time. Corben's illustrations for it are extraordinary, but the story's content is so problematic that when it was reprinted in 1987 by Catalan Communications, it was heavily censored.

Twenty-two years later, in 1994, Corben decided to revise "The Rats in the Walls" into a new version fully rendered using the then-new technology of digital color. With his daughter Beth, he turned the bold black-and-white pages of the original into vibrantly colored ones. The new version was first published in the first and only issue of *From the Pit*. This series was a follow-up to *Den Saga*, and by then, Corben had mastered not just coloring but creating startling three-dimensional images from pen-and-ink drawings. Corben described the coloring process that he and his daughter did:

"I still do my drawing on paper, and about half of the coloring at Fantagor Press is also done on real paper. But more and more operations are being carried out by computers. Furthermore, my assistant and I are becoming more comfortable with the electronic tool and its virtual paper. Beth either colored the pages with color inks and pencils or colored the scanned files electronically in a program called Photoshop. I would then go over them, adding modeling effects."

Sadly, as mentioned, the series was canceled after just one issue, leaving the eponymous interior story unfinished. It was a Lovecraft-inspired tale that pointed to a promising horror series. But the new version of "The Rats in the Walls" was completed. It retained the panel structure and storytelling from the original black-and-white version but added considerable digitally airbrushed rendering, detail, and texture. It also brought clarity to panels that initially printed too dark in newsprint. The color palettes used were generally muted, with two exceptions. The nightmare scene at the bottom of page four was colored in vibrant psychedelic hues. And on page ten, the climax was colored in complementary red and green, giving it maximum chromatic contrast and making the considerable gore stand out. These were also the two parts of the story that were actually redrawn. The text was also rewritten, distancing it further from the original version by having the main character speak with a southern accent. Overall, the colored version of the story using what was cutting-edge technology at the time is a testament to Corben's insatiable appetite for exploring visual techniques, which makes his work extraordinarily experimental and boldly creative.

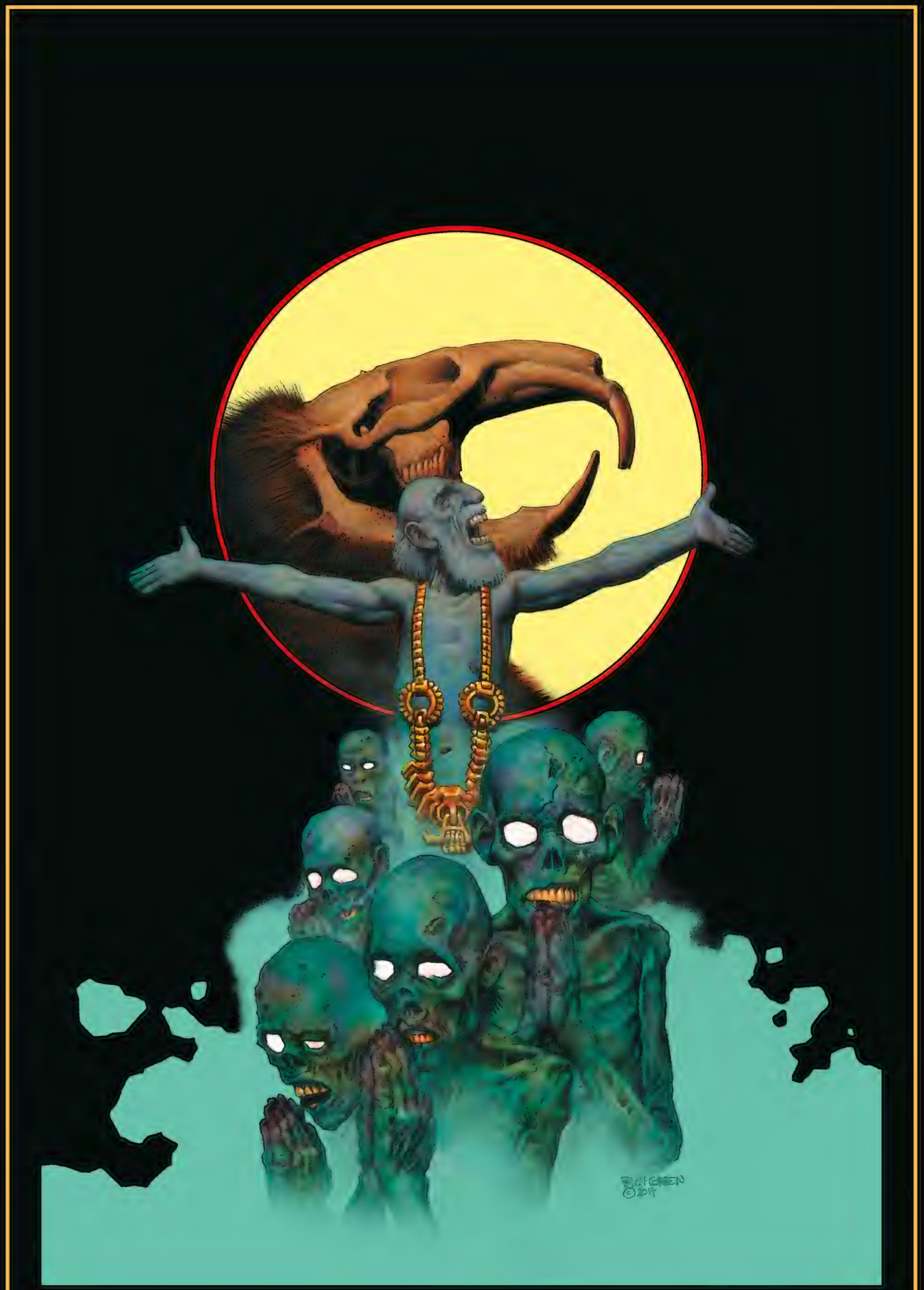
Corben found himself drawn back to Lovecraft's world time and again. After creating a series of comics based on Edgar Allan Poe, the other

master of horror, Corben wrote and illustrated *Haunt of Horror: Lovecraft* (2008), a three-issue series published by Marvel Comics under the MAX imprint. These comics were true to the atmosphere of Lovecraft's original stories and poems while transforming them into Corben's artistic vision. It is important to mention that besides adaptations, Corben drew significant inspiration from Lovecraft's themes throughout his career. This influence is evident in several of his major works, beginning with *Den*, the long-running fantasy saga he first introduced in the 1970s. While not a direct Lovecraft adaptation, the first volume of *Den* embodies many of the same thematic concerns—including an entity named Uhluhtc (Cthulhu spelled backward). In 2012, Corben and writer Jan Strnad collaborated on *Ragemoor*, a series that delves into Lovecraftian concepts of haunted, sentient spaces. Corben's fascination with Lovecraftian horror becomes even more explicit in *Rat God*, which this book reprints. Originally a five-issue series, it is indebted to the well-known story *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. Here, Corben intertwines Lovecraftian motifs with Native American legends. And his final work, *Dimwood*, is also Lovecraftian and features the theme of characters deteriorating into bestiality and worse.

Like Richard Corben, other comics legends such as Alan Moore, Junji Ito, and Mike Mignola have drawn from Lovecraft's mythology. Moore's *Neonomicon* and *Providence* explore the horrors of the Cthulhu mythos, while Ito's *Uzumaki* taps into similar themes through an unstoppable cosmic force. Mignola's *Hellboy* reflects Lovecraftian influence, blending folktales with his own creations. While their approaches differ, these creators share a talent for crafting horror that not only features monsters but also explores humanity's vulnerability against vast cosmic forces. Ultimately, Lovecraft's mythology continues to inspire artists across mediums, with Richard Corben's work standing out as a pinnacle of passion, creativity, and artistry.

José Villarrubia
Baltimore, Maryland
February 21, 2025

Cover for *Rat God* #2



Cover for *Rat God* #4

Cover for *Rat God* #5

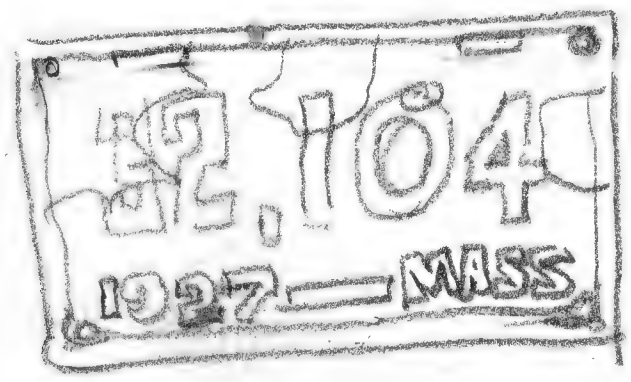
RAT GOD™

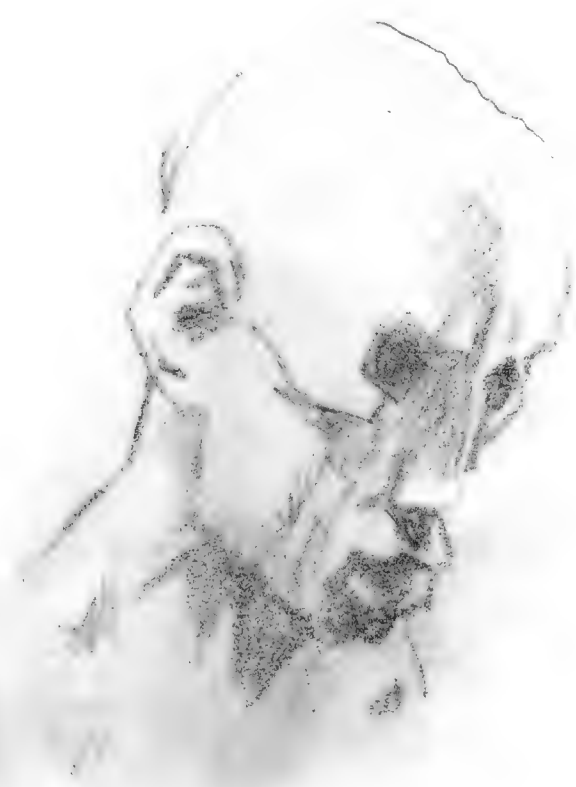
Sketches and studies
by RICHARD CORBEN

Olive-try to escape Zombies

The White Aryan Race is far superior in every way! I am a very delicate nervous person
I have delicate arms and hands like a delicate mountain gorilla!
Elwood Clark

Mass license Plate





ETHAN YUK INDIANS

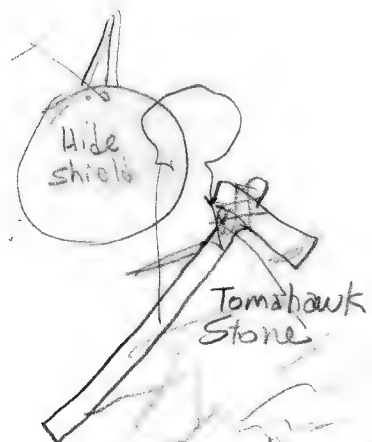
Kept to themselves preyed on other American Tribes Devolved into semi human rustics

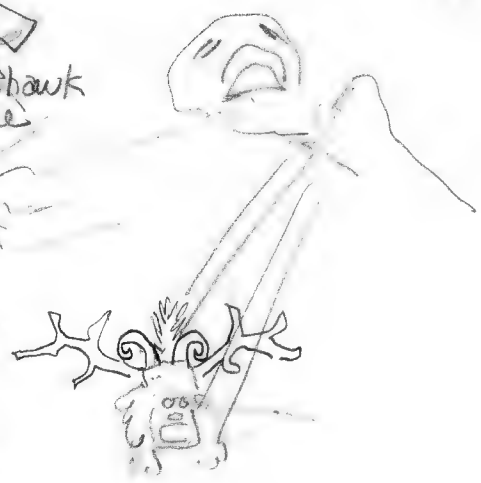
came from Asia to escape persecution.

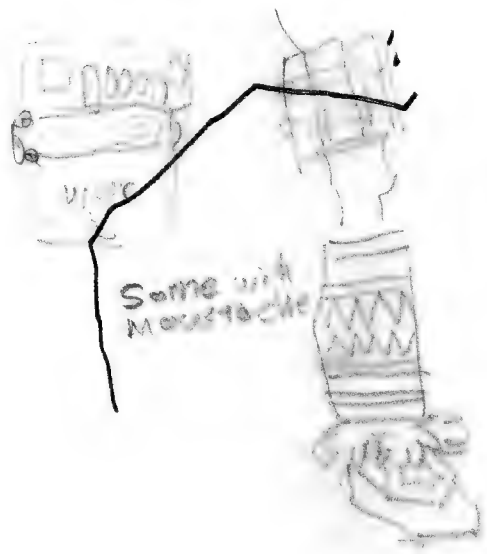
broke up into surface dwellers and subterranean groups.

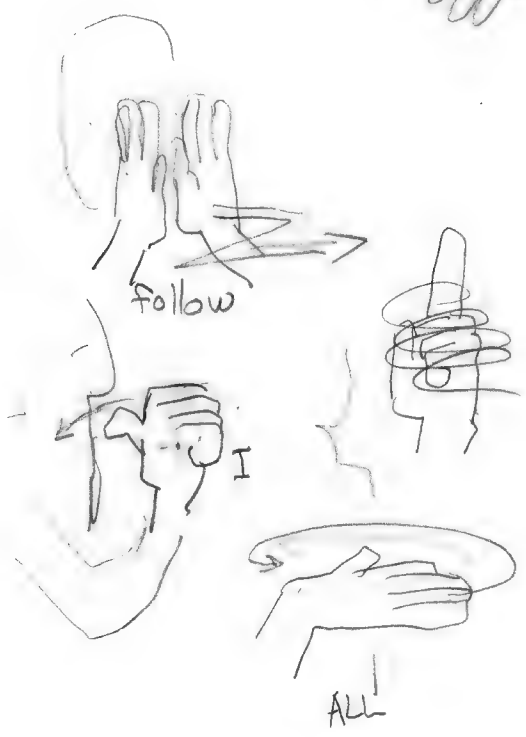
As Mons tells it.

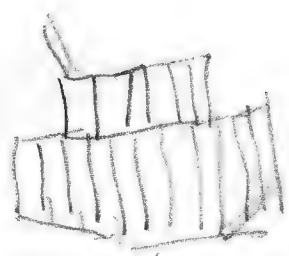
Elwood could find no records of her alleged tribe











CTHANHLUK INDIANS

White men came for gold and minerals. they found it but were strongely affected by the mountain area. They stayed and established the town Boughaurgtl

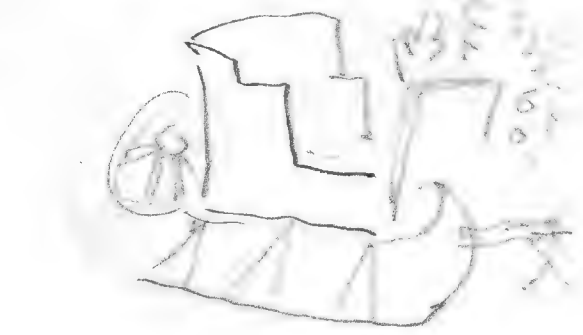
BOUGHU

They were isolated and prefered to remain so.

Chinook Indians from asia

GHUNAK

INDIANS



graveyard
ceremonies - decorated & costumed with Indian motif.

squatting
A huddled form
Covered in dust
& webs - did it move?
2

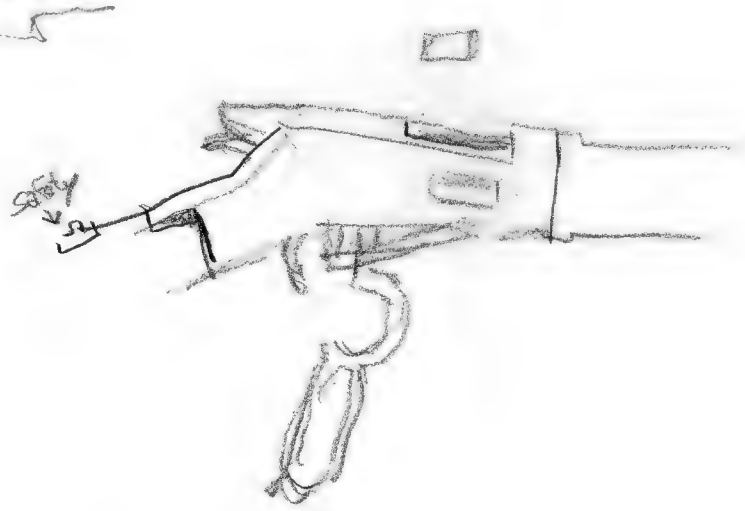
- elements -

Eerie/scary

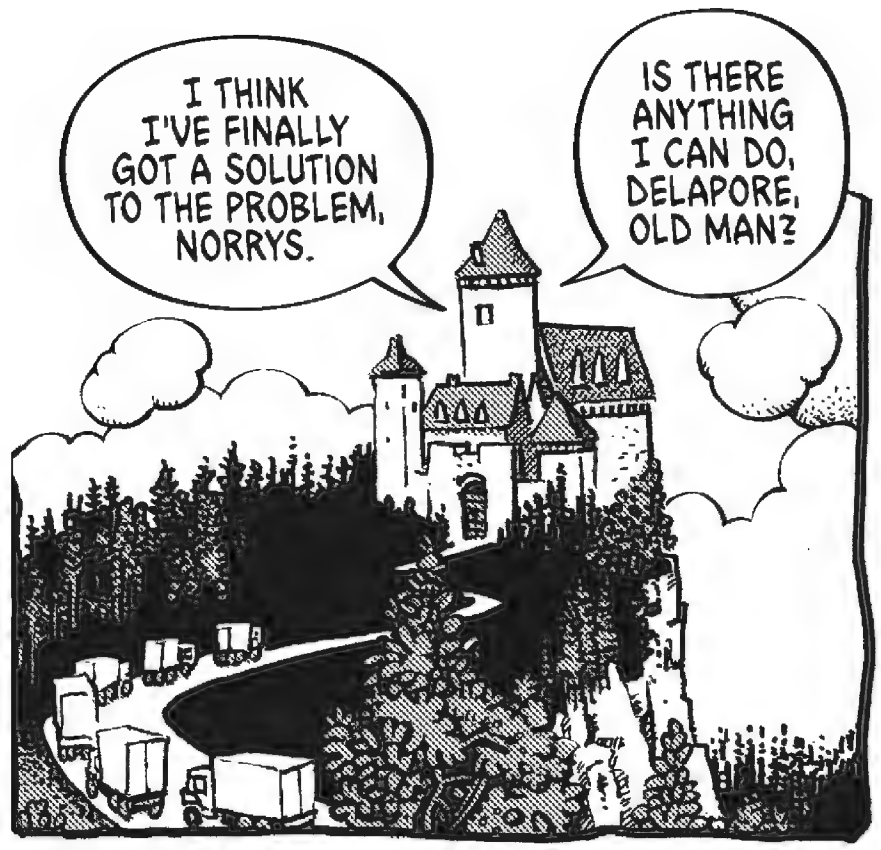
remote scary mansion
" " cemetery
ghost town

tunnels
sub human natives
monstrous overlords predators

Hotel
subterranean labyrinth
abandoned train/tracks



The sketch at the right was for the cover of the second issue of *Rat God*, but the final image was so good we switched it to the first issue, then reused it for this collection.


I THINK I'VE FINALLY GOT A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM, NORRYS.
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO, DELAPORE, OLD MAN?
AH, THEY'RE HERE. YES, I COULD USE A LITTLE HELP.
WE JUST HAVE TO SET FIFTY THOUSAND RAT TRAPS.
IT SHOULDN'T TAKE TOO LONG.
SLURP

Corben did this strip, "Infestation," for the 2014 H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival program. Letters by Nate Piekos.

Richard Corben was born in Missouri and grew up in Sunflower, Kansas, a community that worked for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, an army plant that manufactured bombs in World War II.

Corben drew comics all of his life. An early effort was a series of comics about the adventures of TRAIL, the family dog. Later, he created imitations of Tarzan and Brothers of the Spear. He also showed a keen interest in animation by turning many pads of paper into animated flipbooks.

While attending the Kansas City Art Institute, he concentrated on basic drawing and painting, developing skills that would become vital in creating his chosen realistic style. At that time, his college offered no courses for animation, but by using his father's 8 mm movie camera, Corben nevertheless produced a 5-minute animated film highlighting the labors of Heracles as his senior project.

After graduation, Corben wanted to go to New York to launch a career in comics or animation, but he was shy and timid, and put off such a drastic move. After working in construction for his father for a while, he found a local job as an artist/animator/cameraman in a Kansas City industrial film company. During this time, despite his shyness, he found a girl to marry him.

After nearly ten years at the film company, Corben felt frustrated that he really hadn't given his art career a chance. He started drawing so-called "underground" comix and fanzines at night after working a full-time job during the day. About this same time, Warren Publishing Company began a series of black-and-white horror comics, CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. This was a perfect match for Corben's interests, and he drew several stories for CREEPY on speculation. Unfortunately, none of these were accepted. But the "wannabe" comic book artist persisted and even met James Warren at a science-fiction convention. Finally, Warren and his editor, Bill DuBay, relented and started sending Corben scripts to draw. At last, a foothold was established in his comic career. Even with the responsibilities of a wife, a daughter and a mortgage, the young artist now felt confident enough to quit his full-time job at the industrial film company and devote all his time to drawing.

The underground comix surge spread to Europe, and requests to reprint Corben underground features began to appear. His fantasy character, DEN, was created for the American underground comic, GRIM WIT; DEN was next printed in the French METAL HURLANT, and then printed in the American HEAVY METAL. During this era, Richard and Dona started FANTAGOR PRESS, a publishing company featuring Richard's comics. Unfortunately, the business wasn't enough to support them. Next, Corben began drawing for American comics—D.C., MARVEL, DARK HORSE, and others.

Corben believed that maintaining drawing skills required constant practice. He regularly attended life drawing classes all throughout his career. He found the activity both an ongoing challenge and a source of pleasure.

His love and interest in animation continued throughout his lifetime and motivated him to create digitally animated movies he shared on his web site and Facebook page.

Richard was married for 56 years to Dona, and was the father of watercolor artist and comic book colorist, Beth. His life and love was devoted to his family and his art. He was a humble man and an extremely kind, good man.

Richard Corben died December 2, 2020.

RAT GOD™

RICHARD CORBEN

Eisner Award Hall of Fame inductee Richard Corben's chilling story inspired by the works of H. P. Lovecraft is finally collected as part of the new Richard Corben hardcover library.

Terrible things stalk the forests outside Arkham in this chilling original tale from comics master Richard Corben! An arrogant city slicker on a quest to uncover the background of a young woman from the backwoods finds horrors beyond imagining, combining Lovecraftian mutations with Native American legends.

This volume also includes a foreword by Bram Stoker Award–winning author Caitlín R. Kiernan (*The Red Tree, The Drowning Girl*) as well as "Reanimator" and both the original black-and-white and the color versions of the long-out-of-print "The Rats in the Walls," Lovecraft-penned tales adapted by Richard Corben!

DARK HORSE BOOKS

FANTAGRAPHICS PRESS

SON OF ULTRON